

for blacks only

black strategies
for change in america

STERLING TUCKER

1971



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The polarization of America continues.

Black (and white) radicals call for the overthrow of the government, for the destruction of what they believe to be a pervasively racist society. Theirs is the voice of violence.

Responding are those who demand order at any price: additional laws, harsher penalties, the prompt and sometimes indiscriminate use of police and National Guard force. These, too, are the voices of violence.

Too often, the voices of the extremists are the only ones we hear; and we begin to believe that we have to choose between them.

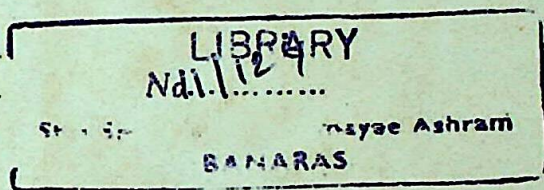
Sterling Tucker believes there is another way — the way of sanity and realism. He believes there are at hand — within the system — effective tools for change.

Tucker begins by providing an overview of the civil rights movement and why it failed. He discusses the meaning of Black Power, suggesting that this concept initially released wholesome energy, but was not able to offer strength, purpose and cohesion to the equal rights movement. Turning to an assessment of the national mood, the author shows that fear and guilt have prevented white America from understanding black anger; misconstruing the nature of black violence, whites have enshrined "law and order" at the expense of justice.

Then Tucker proceeds with an analysis of realistic strategies. Having shown the failure of black radicals to relate to the realities of the American scene, he considers separatism as a concept, showing its dangers as an ideology as well as its constructive uses as a temporary tactic. He deals at length with the question of alliances, and suggests the ways in which whites, earlier banished from black organizations, can be enlisted again without compromise.

Drawing on his own experience as head of Urban League Field Services, Tucker shows how broader elements of society can be engaged in

(Continued on back flap)



For Blacks Only

Other Books by Sterling Tucker

Beyond the Burning: Life and Death of the Ghetto

Black Reflections on White Power

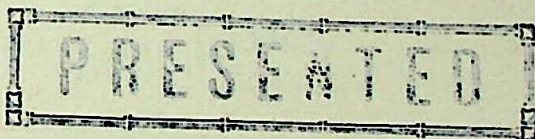
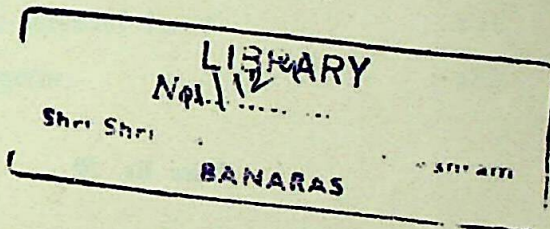
For Blacks Only

Black Strategies for Change in America

STERLING TUCKER

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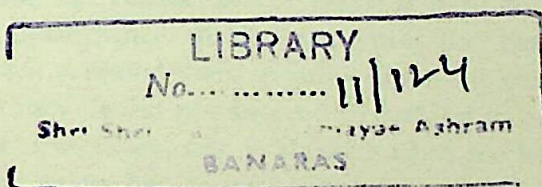
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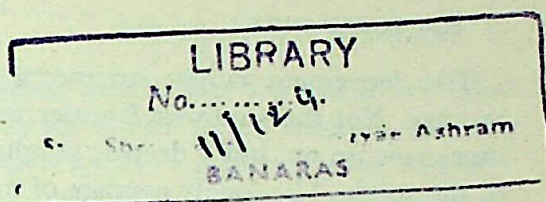
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1973.

The Death of a Movement

There Was a Movement

We call it the civil rights movement. It was a turning point in our history, doing for America what neither the abolitionist movement nor the Civil War had been able to do. Fighting from lunch counters to the halls of Congress, from city jails to the Supreme Court, it brought America smack up against her Constitution and her professed morality.

It did not kill racism, but it made it hard to practice with indifference. It did not erase the barriers, but at least it revealed them, ripping down the curtains of complacency. It did not succeed in cashing in on the promise of democracy, but it showed what we had to do and how far we had to travel if that word was to be more than an empty slogan.

The movement gave us all a larger picture of ourselves. To the Black a new dignity and a new hope; to the white a whole new category of experience and a challenge to reaffirm his integrity. To all of us a bigger share in humanity.

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The movement taught us, too, a new meaning of courage. Not the wild-west frontier variety that Americans grow up on, but a deeper, tougher kind, a gamble of the spirit. The lonely courage of moving forward in the face of brutal power with no defense but one's humanity. Men, women, children marching singing into jail . . . it was like nothing America had ever seen before. And all of us, black and white, were caught up in the sense of acting on history.

It was a beautiful chapter and America will never be the same. But it is over now.

The civil rights movement as such is dead. It is not just the singing and the marching that is over. The vast, organized, common effort to change the system, to erase the inequities, has died away too. Though we still sometimes join hands and sing. "We Shall Overcome," it is more like an act of remembrance. Though we still knock at the doors of City Hall and Congress with programs for equal opportunities and equal results, there is no longer the surge and pressure of a mass movement behind us.

What is there instead? Certainly there is plenty of black action, more even than before. Although some organizations drove away their white co-workers, giving them the impression they were no longer wanted or needed, although we are fragmented into numberless groups and speak with myriad voices and often with flailing rhetoric, we are busy. Yes, there is plenty of action on the community level and that is good. But it is not necessarily civil rights and it is not a movement.

In the ghettos Blacks have started day-care centers

LIBRARY

No.....

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BANARAS

and cleanup projects, associations for black businessmen and programs for youth gangs, tutoring services and job counseling centers—a growing range of laudable civic activity. And that is just what much of it is: civic activity, not civil rights, not institutional change. Just as they do in the white community, civic services aim at improving the quality of life within the existing system.

For the Blacks that means picking up the pieces the system has shattered—picking up broken lives and broken bodies and trying to piece them together again. It means trying to build hope where there is no hope. It means teaching our black brothers and sisters how to live in the system, not how to change it. A 13-year-old in the ghetto is as seasoned by life as a 20-year-old in the suburbs. He has had to learn how to beat the system, how to defend himself and hustle and connive. He is not changing anything—he's just learning to live with what is there. And many of our programs now do not really aim at anything more fundamental than that.

Civil rights on the other hand—civil rights action as I see it—is not concerned with patching lives or bandaging wounds or teaching people to survive the system. It has only one aim: to hit the cause. To change the system where it penalizes you for the color of your skin. To change it so that black Americans can grow and achieve, can work and learn and play, with the same chances as the whites. That is why, for example, the Urban League, working for black advancement since 1910, was not generally considered a “civil rights” movement until the early 1960's. Until then it

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had been predominantly an agency for social work, providing sorely needed services to the black community, opening up training opportunities, jobs, housing, but not devoting the major portion of its efforts to changing the fundamental causes of inequity.

In working to transform the system, civil rights action does not seek weapons or leverage outside it. Its genius has been to use the system itself, to find within it the necessary leverage for change. Pressing firmly and unremittingly on the Fourteenth Amendment, the movement succeeded in overturning the massive weight of legalized segregation in the schools. By keeping nonviolent direct action within the framework of the law, by being ready to submit to arrest, it dramatized the injustice and the inhumanity of the system and prepared the way for the civil rights legislation of the 60's.

Working through the system is slow and painful; it requires faith. But civil rights action was predicated on faith: it believed democracy could work in America. It looked to the law for leverage, the white man's law, and saw how it could be made to work for the black man too.

The civil rights movement had varied strategies—from legal work to direct action, from freedom rides to voter registration. But there was only one goal: integration. The only question was how fast integration could be achieved. Except for the isolated fringe group of black Muslims there was no talk of separatism then, no thought of it. The very premise of the movement's legal action was that separatism bred and perpetuated inequality. The years of unremitting efforts

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that triumphed in the landmark cases of *Sweatt v. Painter* in 1950 and *Brown v. Topeka* in 1954 were inspired by the conviction that only in integration could equality come. They were fired by the belief that the only way a black child could get the same education as a white child was to be in the same classroom at the same time. So whatever the target or tactic, the goal was always the same: integration.

Yes, we had a movement then. We moved in a common direction, arrayed in a common front: each major organization working its own way, each with its own special relevance.

The NAACP was the principal legal arm of this movement, and the main legislative thrust. Through its skilled lawyers it worked to involve and utilize the power of the courts. Through Clarence Mitchell's Washington Bureau it walked the halls of Congress and pressed for needed laws.

The Urban League was the planning arm. It had worked for long years to open jobs for Blacks, pressing the companies to hire and persuading the industrial unions that a divided house of labor could not stand. This experience permitted it now to rally a broad basis of support for the movement. Enlisting the aid of business and organized labor, it designed programs for change within the system.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) represented the moral arm of the movement. America has a soul, it said, we must bring the moral conscience of America to bear. Its nonviolent demonstrations gave much of white America its first look at the Bull Connors of the South with their police dogs

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and cattle-prods. It jolted awake the leaders of American church life; it dramatized the moral urgency of the racial crisis to the society as a whole.

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was the direct-action arm. Its freedom rides broke the back of Jim Crow in interstate travel, in the bus terminals and lunch counters and restrooms. Gone were the days when the bodies that could sit in front in Cincinnati had to shuffle to the back of the bus when it crossed the Kentucky state line. If SCLC challenged the soul of America, CORE challenged its guts and raw bone.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the youth arm, specialized in building local political strength. From small-town Albany, Georgia, to big-city Atlanta it launched campaigns for voter registration. It drew young people from across the country to the battle to give the Southern Blacks a political voice, a political tool.

Each organization had a program then; together they covered the major target areas. Each was organized in depth with a fairly discernible structure and an activity that could be identified. Although jealousies existed, communication links were strong. Once a month in the early 1960's the leaders of the major organizations met together. With the help of a Taconic Foundation grant, they convened informally to discuss common goals and common problems, and upon occasion to share financial contributions.

Erosion of the Faith

The historic decade of civil rights achievements could not have occurred had these organizations and

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their leadership not worked together in a common direction and a common trust. But this coalition and the mass spirit behind it was perhaps doomed from the start by the very nature and dimension of the problem. We sang "We Shall Overcome," but could the disease of racial injustice that had flourished for centuries be overcome in a few years? Could it be overcome by a Supreme Court decision or a belated act or two of Congress? Could it be overcome because a few Blacks and whites were willing to be arrested and beaten, were willing to die?

Sure, things were happening. We were showing that the law could be challenged and that change was possible. But the change, which was historic enough on paper, proceeded at a snail's pace in practical life. A few brave black students moved into a white high school here, a few courageous black voters registered there, lunch counters desegregated, bus terminals opened. But at such a cost: it exhausted the spirit as much as it inspired. The progress was pitifully slow. The inertia of the system began to make itself felt, as did the deep roots of white racism.

Even rapid change could not have kept pace with the growing black restlessness. Each step forward whetted the appetite for freedom, just as each step forward revealed the broad, bleak landscape of the problem.

What did seem to be accelerating was not black progress, but white resistance. Peaceful demonstrations were met with fire hoses, cattle-prods, and police dogs. Local black citizens and civil rights workers were jailed, beaten, tortured; some were murdered. No one was safe from the awakened fury of the Southern white

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supremacist— not even four little girls in Sunday School. Where was man's moral conscience? Where was the expected response to nonviolence? Where was the Southern citizens' acknowledgment of federal law? Where, some wondered, was the protecting arm of the federal government?

Slowly the faith that supported the movement began to erode. The faith in nonviolence. The faith in the American system. For a while it was a private bitterness that one tried to swallow while keeping up the fight. But soon the frustration began to express itself publicly, both in violent rhetoric and in violent action.

In the 1963 March on Washington, John Lewis, then head of SNCC, was scheduled to speak at the Lincoln Memorial. He had prepared his speech in a collective effort with his SNCC co-workers, and the new mood it expressed was in glaring contrast to the attitude of celebration intended for that day:

The civil rights bill is too little and too late. There is not one thing in that bill that will protect our people from police brutality. . . .

We will not wait for the courts to act, for we have been waiting hundreds of years. We will not wait for the President, the Justice Department, nor Congress, but we will take matters into our own hands and create a source of power outside any national structure. . . . The revolution is at hand. . . . The black masses are on the march. . . . We shall pursue our own scorched earth policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground— nonviolently. We will make the action of the past few months look petty.

Such language, tame by today's standards, was too much for 1963. Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle of the Dio-

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cese of Washington threatened not to participate in the rally, and the traditional leadership of the movement believed it was too radical, potentially too divisive, for the purposes of the March. They prevailed upon Lewis to change it.

The anger he would have expressed was shared by many, however, and continued to grow. It even erupted in sporadic physical violence. In Cambridge, Maryland, in 1963, as local black protesters under the leadership of Gloria Richardson demonstrated for the desegregation of restaurants, theaters, and schools, six whites were hit by gunfire. The governor called out the National Guard.

Not only did Southern resistance feed the slow fires of frustration: white reactions nationwide deepened the disappointment. The 1964 presidential campaign saw an attempt by a major candidate to play upon the whites' racial fears. Open-housing legislation was repealed in California, Washington, Michigan. The North seemed to retrench with the declaration that the 1954 Supreme Court decision did not apply to de facto segregation. Polls showed that whites across the country felt the pace of change too fast. The word "backlash" became current.

Black impatience spread. In 1964 Bayard Rustin, a seasoned worker within the movement, gave voice to it publicly:

The Negro community is no longer taking Martin Luther King's brand of nonviolence.... No Negro leader if he wants to be listened to is going to tell any Negroes that they should love white people. Furthermore I won't do it because I don't encourage that

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kind of psychological dishonesty. They don't love them, they don't need to love them, there is no basis on which they can love them. Who can love people who do these things to people?

Strains were gradually appearing, in philosophy and in tactics, but the movement held together and continued strong: The traditional leadership still exerted powerful influence, and the assumption prevailed that the movement still had the common goal of integration.

But did it? Was integration the only basis for equality and freedom? Or was it only a dream and a delusion to suppose that the Black could find dignity within a white-dominated society? As the movement came up against entrenched resistance in North and South alike, it became evident that racism was not just a localized malignancy, residing in archaic Southern law and custom, but a part of the American system itself. It did not just put us at the back of the bus; it closed off neighborhoods to live in, banks to borrow from, adequate schools for our children, jobs and training and union membership.

The Kerner Commission on Civil Disorders would state later, "...our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." The black man has always known that these two societies were separate and unequal. Now he realized that so they would remain for a long, long time. "If integration is the goal," he began to say, "and this is the rate of change, then it will be my great-great-grandchildren that, with luck, are going to make it." He began to wonder if integration *was* the answer; he

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began to wonder if there was not another path to follow.

He looked at the so-called desegregated schools—the blackboard jungles—of the Northern ghettos, and then he looked at traditional black education in the South: inadequate as it was it had turned out great leaders. He looked at the closed doors of the nation's trade unions and then at the skilled black crafts of the old South. "Look, man," he said, "maybe there's another way." And it was as if the clock turned back to Booker T.—Booker T. Washington standing up in Atlanta in 1893 and saying, "Cast down your buckets where you are." In his words and in his life he had encouraged his fellow Blacks to find dignity and fulfillment within their own world. We don't want to eat with you, live with you, compete with you, he said in effect to the whites; but we do want the chance to live and to eat and to work. We will do it in our own community.

The black radicals of his day accused him of selling out, of trading their birthright for a mess of pottage. He was relegating them to second-class citizenship, they felt. But now in the middle-60's the radicals themselves began to echo Booker T. There must be a faster road to equality, they argued, even if it means a separate system. If there are two societies, then let us work within ours. We will go on our own way, live in our own neighborhoods, have our own neighborhood schools. One new element stood out, however: they wanted control—control of the schools and institutions and decisions of that separate world that was theirs.

So they began to get off the integration bandwagon. If any occasion in history can be singled out as the

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turning point, it was the Meredith March in June of 1966. Then the new spirit took hold and the crucial differences that were to split and ultimately fragment the movement became evident.

The New Defiance

When Aubrey James Norvell rose from the underbrush along Highway 51 and shot James Meredith on his march through Mississippi, the leaders of the civil rights movement converged spontaneously as if in answer to an irresistible summons.

The week before, at the White House Conference on Civil Rights, the leaders had not been responsive to Meredith's plan. He was going to walk from Memphis to Jackson. A March Against Fear he called it. "I want to encourage the 450,000 unregistered Negroes to go to the polls and register...and point out and challenge the all-pervasive and overriding fear that dominates the day-to-day life of the Negro in the United States, and especially in the South, and particularly in Mississippi." What kind of strategy was this? Of what practical use? Marches and confrontations should always be carefully planned in advance. Meredith's idea appeared quixotic, dangerous, and provocative. The response was cool. James Meredith headed out alone with six friends.

And on the second day he was shot. That shot was like an electric charge galvanizing the movement. All quibbling over tactics was dropped as the leaders flew to Memphis to take up his march, to continue it for him. As they rallied there and as they marched along that same highway, their ranks swelling into hundreds

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and then thousands, they began to understand what Meredith had meant.

One problem in trying to produce change is that you do not know what kind of confrontation will occur; often that confrontation is with yourself. To act effectively, you must first meet and face yourself. Meredith, in seeking to challenge the "all-pervasive and overriding fear" on the part of the Black, was asking in effect whether we as black men were not part of the problem ourselves. No one had raised the question quite that way before. He was saying that one reason this situation had not changed much was that the black men of the South were afraid. Treated like boys all their lives, they acted like boys, thought like boys, hid behind the skirts of black women. They were not prepared to stand up and be men; they were not prepared to die. So he would march through Mississippi as a symbol of what the black man could be.

Then in a spray of buckshot he was felled on the highway like a dog. This could have doubled the fear of black men: you try to stand up and look what happens. So the Kings and the Carmichaels, the Youngs and Jim Farmers and Floyd McKissicks, felt that they had to pick up this march and carry it through at all costs. And they did.

From the start, then, it had a different spirit than other marches and other rallies. We were not there to show how nonviolent we could be, we were there to take up a dare from whitey. "White America," we were saying; "this is what Jim Meredith was trying to do and you can't frighten us by shooting him. We will show you it can be done. We will show you we are not

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afraid." So black America grew bolder and bolder on that march. We were black and we were proud and we were gonna say it loud. A new freedom was felt by everyone there, a new kind of emancipation.

Nonviolence, however exalted its moral purpose, was after all a recognition of the greater power of the white man. Nonviolence says, "We cannot beat you through power, so we will win through submission. We will let you beat us and hose us and use cattle-prods on us as if we were animals. We will take it, so that the world will see how brutal you are, and so that you also can confront your own inhumanity. We will train ourselves to this kind of submission; we will let you pick us up and throw us into the paddywagon and kick us and whip us. But we are still afraid of you, so we will have some whites with us, because that will bring the newsmen and the television cameras and then you won't really kill us all."

Furthermore, nonviolent action was almost by necessity carefully planned: the stage was set, the actors were briefed. Often, as at the Selma bridge, it was even prearranged with local authorities how far the demonstrators would walk, how many would be arrested. To avoid chaos, confrontation was negotiated.

Here suddenly, on the Meredith march, the whole movement was involved in something that was not planned at all. Some leaders wondered whether they even should appear, some arrived late. It started spontaneously and grew of its own momentum. And so did a new spirit of pride and defiance.

That is why, when we ran that night in Canton, Mississippi, we felt shame for the first time at running

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away. We had arrived in Canton, I remember, getting on toward Tougaloo and Jackson, and had determined to hold a rally there for voter registration. When the local white authorities denied us permission, we decided with the black community there to go ahead and call the meeting on the grounds of their neighborhood school.

There was a new defiance in this very decision. And a new logic: if you city fathers won't give us a permit, we will seek permission from the people whose school it is. You gave us that school; we didn't ask for a segregated school, but it's all black and it's ours. Everything can't belong to you, something's got to belong to us. You can only push us so far. It's for us to decide if we will hold a meeting there; and we will.

This was a new concept, that the school belonged to the people of the neighborhood. The notion of community control was being voiced; not only voiced but acted upon. We would march to the school.

I remember standing on the back of the truck with Dr. King and Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick and others, as we rallied beforehand while everybody got up their nerve. Then off we started arm-in-arm, living embodiments of the new spirit of challenge, a thousand people falling into the march. We reached the schoolgrounds. And there, massed on the side, with gas masks, stood local police and state troopers waiting. There it was, visibly arrayed: white power, an awesome sight.

We commenced the meeting; they started moving in. And when they began throwing those canisters all we could do was — run. It was embarrassing to all of

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us. After all our proud statements, all our determination and newly-voiced boldness, they had only to amass that white power of theirs—and we scooted off in all directions, staggering and choking and hustling Dr. King away because we were always fearful that he might get killed in a situation of that kind.

I knew then for certain, although I had suspected it before, that I am not nonviolent. Instinctively I picked up a couple of canisters and threw them back and ran only when I could not take the gas any more, when I could not breathe. Like the others, I had a wet handkerchief ready; holding it over my mouth I crouched close to the ground. And there they came trampling over people. You would not believe man could be so brutal. Nonviolence? You just want to beat the hell out of them. You figure you could beat a couple of them anyway; you could not win, of course, but you could take on a couple. So I knew that I was not going to get involved in any nonviolent protest where I had to submit quietly to their violence. With the rage in me, I could not do that.

We reassembled at the church. Here we came, the big, strong black men who would take on whitey's dare. The women fed us the meal they had prepared for us to eat in triumph after the great meeting at our "own" school. We ate it and we talked, the whole night through. Should we leave town? Should we let them run us out like that? We were at a loss; Dr. King was weary and said little. In the end we left Hosea Williams and a few others to stay on in Canton and the rest of us moved on—to Jackson and the culmination of the march.

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The cry of black power had already sounded on the march and it announced the turning point we had reached. It was not just a momentary fancy or the rhetoric of a fringe group. It grew out of all the frustration that had been building over the past years, catalyzed now by the unforeseen circumstances of the march itself. The appeal it held to the rank and file of the movement was dramatized then. They expressed the new mood of defiance: We're not taking anything more from whitey. The praying and the singing has ended, something else must work. Black power...black control...liberation....Dr. King's leadership, uncontested on previous marches, was now clearly being challenged. It was Stokely Carmichael, with his call for black power, that captured not only the headlines but the imagination of the Blacks who were participating. It was he who drew the cheers and voiced the spirit.

Black power, at that point, was not yet a rejection of nonviolence; it was rather a new awareness of the self, as a person of pride and dignity who did not want to be submissive in claiming his rights: I want to stand on my own feet to get my rights. I don't want to plead for them on my knees. I will bow down no more. I will not wait for the sweet bye 'n' bye, or look only to the Lord for my comfort. I'm going to do something for myself and I'm not going to be afraid.

That was the mood, and it made me, for one, feel good.

Army in Disarray

An immediate consequence of the Meredith March was that every black leader and spokesman was repeat-

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edly called upon to define black power. White America was shocked and dismayed; the very words had a dangerous, subversive ring. Liberals felt betrayed, reactionaries felt threatened. Like all the others I was continually asked to clarify and defend the concept, as if it were already a codified doctrine, or a formulated program of action. On every side definitions were elaborated, decking out the notion of black power in political, economic, social, and psychological terms, attempting to make doctrine and program of what had emerged so spontaneously from the civil rights struggle. It became a semantic exercise, and a futile one at that; for black power was too broad and nebulous a concept, and often too personal, for black America to agree on what it meant in terms of goals and strategies. SNCC sensibly declared a moratorium on definitions: Black power will mean what we want it to mean, period. The trap many Blacks fell into here was to confuse a psychological necessity, the need to proclaim black identity, with a program of action. This confusion lay at the root of the cleavages that were to tear the movement apart.

For all Blacks, the psychological impact of black power was profound. For too long, black America had been white-washed by the values and standards of the white majority; for too long it had tried to be imitation-white. To face and accept one's blackness, to take open pride in it at last, was deeply exhilarating. To affirm black is beautiful was itself beautiful. The sudden access to self-respect was a kind of rebirth. It untied knots, straightened backs, and lifted faces. We identified with each other in a new way, we were a

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brotherhood. "Hello, brother." In recognizing ourselves, we recognized and rejoiced in each other. Our likeness, our oneness, we now saw as an asset; and the unity became not just physical, but spiritual. We had our own brand of beauty and style. Hair-straighteners and bleach-creams were out the window. Black womanhood began to flower; a black woman did not need to be white any more to be beautiful—her day was coming back.

This was then a period of introspection for black America, as it went behind doors to sort itself out. It was "time out" while we got ourselves together. Like sensitivity training, it was engrossing and rewarding; but not much was happening on the outside. The danger, of course, was that one could get lost in it; getting one's self together could become an endless preoccupation, and black identity a goal in itself. Many succumbed to this danger, abandoning the battlefield. The movement seemed mired in inertia, its drive and momentum lost.

The new pride and self-assertiveness should have produced a surge forward in the movement, but such momentum did not develop. A battle cry alone is not sufficient. Specific, concrete, practical programs are required. Attention was unfortunately diverted from that, not only by the heady search for black identity, but by growing internal criticism and divisiveness.

It is ironic that the cry of black power which united black America in a sense of common destiny and common identity, as nothing had united it before, also divided black America and produced cleavages deeper than had anything in its history.

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For one thing, although it appears now a trivial matter, the term alone bothered many people and the sweeping use of it offended even more. To most middle-class Negroes who had been committed to integration the word "black" presented a difficulty. At one time to call a Negro black was as insulting as calling him a nigger. Even from one's brothers it was still hard to accept. Those who had struggled upward in American society, those whose hopes and successes were measured by the standards of this society, felt threatened by something akin to loss of identity. They had fought hard and with self-respect to rise above the disadvantage of their color, to make good despite their handicap. The distinction of color was always an obstacle, a negative factor that they had to struggle beyond. And now they were being called black, black, black. After all the years of struggle they were now suddenly expected to identify themselves as black and rally round the banner of blackness. They were in effect being drawn back into the barrel and told that, "you can't go unless all of us go."

Furthermore, they resented and feared the image this would convey to America, the image of a monolithic black society. They were not opposed to solidarity as such, behind a program or campaign, but they resisted it under the banner of African heritage, under the banner of blackness alone. They feared that this would reinforce and perpetuate the white assumption that all Blacks are the same, all to be judged by the color of their skin. They feared it because it was precisely this identification, this attribution of sameness, that they had been seeking to escape. For them the road

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to equality had, in the main, been a road one walked as an individual. Through education, training, and hard work the individual could lift himself out of the climate that surrounds blackness. By motivating his children, he could help them escape—not the black community as such, for associations there were precious and genuine, but the negative connotations which society had placed upon the black community.

Now, as the militant youth with their call to blackness became more vocal and dominant, many of those over 30 in the great middle class of black America felt confused, threatened, isolated. It took time for them to understand and accept what the cry for black identity actually meant. It took time for them to hear what it was saying. It was saying that black is more than color, it is an attitude. It was saying that blacks had to face their own negative feelings and their own assumptions of inferiority. It meant that they had to recognize that blackness was negative to them only because they had been brainwashed for generations, and that they could not escape to full equality or true freedom as long as the shame of being black still lingered.

If some conservative, middle-class Blacks now found themselves on the sidelines in this heady period of black self-assertion, how much more so did the whites. As student worker and clergyman, as freedom-rider and community organizer, the white man had been an intimate and integral part of the civil rights struggle. The movement had had the benefit of his money, his intelligence, his courage. He had given time, effort, and sometimes his life; and he had not tried to take over. Though he took over and ran everything else in

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the country, this one thing he left to the leadership of the blacks and let them star.

But in a movement intoxicated with black pride and self-assertion, captured by the psychological necessity of black self-determination and independence, there no longer seemed to be room for whites. Black America had something to prove not only to the rest of the nation, but to itself. As Meredith had pointed out, the yoke of bondage was not just external, it was in the spirit of the black man, in his fear and sense of inadequacy. "Now only black people can convey the revolutionary idea that black people are able to do things themselves," said Stokely Carmichael. What role then was left for whites?

Actually, they were excluded only from a couple of the more militant organizations, namely SNCC and CORE. And here, it was the black rank and file rather than the leadership that pressed for the rapid expulsion of white co-workers. They took their leaders' rejection of integration as a goal to its logical extreme. Heady with black pride and unheeding of long-term strategy, they said, "There's no place for whitey here. If black is beautiful and black is power, then get whitey out, push him out. We'll use on him the same tactics he's used on us. Even if we could trust him now, this is something we've got to do for ourselves. In our blackness, in our solidarity, is our strength: we'll be an all-black army."

So the vocal minority sent white liberals struggling for a role and a way to relate. In reaction, white America suddenly, ironically, became integration-oriented. "What has happened to our goal of one society?" it

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asked black America, defensively trying to hold it now to the language of the American dream. But this language rang hollow. By their contemptuous rejection of it, the new militants dramatized how far from reality were both the language and the dream. "Integration is just a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy," they said with Carmichael. The programs of the traditional civil rights organizations were ridiculed, as were leaders like Dr. King, with his "singing and praying" and his talk of moral conscience. Efforts, like those of the Urban League, to fight within the system for jobs and housing and educational opportunities were viewed with scorn and accused of leaving the basic problem untouched.

Though their defiance offended many, Blacks and whites alike, the new militants were saying something very important, and people were forced to listen. "When you talk of working through the system," they were saying in so many words, "it still boils down to asking whitey to do something, because the system is his. In the last analysis he'll still only do what he wants to do. If he gives you anything, it's only a token, only charity. It might make you feel a little better, but it won't change anything. Any *real* change, he won't give you: You've got to figure a way to *take* it from him. What you've got to have is power. The only thing he really understands is power."

Such talk frightened whites. It also scared some Blacks who did not want to see whites frightened. Many Blacks, like many whites, believe progress can only be made when people agree that progress is to be

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made. They saw much to be lost if the white majority became fearful and angry.

It was inevitable that black bitterness should erupt in violent rhetoric, just as it would eventually erupt in riots, for white America has not let anything work quickly enough or significantly enough to remain non-violent. Many Blacks were saying now with Robert Williams, "If a civil war is necessary then let it happen." Talk sprang up of guerilla warfare and sabotage.

As the violent rhetoric escalated, it presented a danger to the movement perhaps greater than that of scaring whites—it obscured the real tasks that lay ahead. Beyond the clouds of militant oratory the immediate, tangible, and tough jobs that needed to be done seemed to recede from view.

Basic differences, then, relating to means and ends, tore at the body of the movement. These conflicts were aggravated by the intolerance displayed by the more radical elements. It was ironic that those most vocal about black unity and soul brotherhood were the least tolerant of divergency. They made deliberate efforts to exclude or isolate those Blacks who were not in full agreement with them. The position of many black leaders was challenged, their relevancy questioned. Established leaders were called Uncle Toms; they were accused of selling out to the "enemy." In a speech, Adam Clayton Powell referred to Martin "Loser" King; other bandwagon militants, parading their new contempt, spoke of "Whitey" Young and "Boy" Wilkins. Many rank-and-file moderates, even if not attacked personally, now found themselves outside of what appeared to be the mainstream of the movement.

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But despite all these differences, real efforts were made at the top levels of leadership to create an appearance of unity. Even militants like Carmichael saw that if progress was to be made, the fighting within the family had to cease. A new kind of organization appeared, generated by the desire for unity or at least collaboration. As Black United Fronts and Black Student Unions were created, the intention was often made explicit that philosophical differences would be handled, discussed, and fought over behind closed doors. By the same token, in order to display unity, such unequivocal advocates of integration as Channing Phillips, Walter Fauntroy, and myself joined with the radicals in the Black United Front of Washington, D. C., and did so to the shock and dismay of many moderate Blacks and whites. But such efforts could not resurrect the trust and common direction that had characterized the movement. Real unity seemed illusory, just as confrontation in concrete situations with the insidious realities of white racism made black power also seem a mirage.

The Enemy Is Everywhere

Militancy imparts a sense of strength, cohesiveness, and courage. As with soldiers getting psyched up before an engagement, whipping up their nerve and determination until they are ready to meet all odds, militancy is important. But it is not enough. If troops are to stay psyched up enough to continue the fight, they must have at least a chance to win; they must have weapons and a strategy.

Girded with new pride and defiance you can march

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out to war; but when the enemy starts shooting you down, you discover that you need more than fighting spirit. To feel that you are a man, that you have dignity, is not enough. You need tools, you need strategy — and you need to be able to see the enemy.

The target became less visible as the focus of the racial struggle moved to the North in the mid-1960's. Until then the South had been the arena of civil rights action. Although its participating organizations had a national base, the movement was essentially Southern. The legal and legislative work of the NAACP was aimed at the clear, concrete inequities of Southern law. The voter registration campaigns and sit-ins of SNCC, the freedom rides of CORE—all were geared to confrontation with the blatantly racist institutions of the South.

While the movement had been making some headway in the South, slowly pushing away bars to the voting booth, to equal education, and to retail jobs, these gains were not mirrored in the North. Although a black middle class had been emerging, through such work as that of the Urban League; segregation still abounded, and the poor got poorer. The court decisions the movement had achieved were not applicable to Northern ghetto schools, nor did the civil rights legislation affect the patterns of segregation in housing and employment there.

The situation in the North was not only untouched, it was deteriorating. There, in the early 60's, while white America's revenue rose, black family income did not keep pace. As the black Northern slums sank in poverty, congestion, and squalor, black unemploy-

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ment rose. Dislocated from rural tradition, packed into intolerable conditions and deprived of hope, the black urban masses were raw material for combustion. As Robert Kennedy had seen in 1961 the potential for explosion was there, awaiting ignition. It ignited in Watts. The rioting which erupted there became a pattern as it swept through more than a hundred cities in subsequent summers. The riot seemed to be an expression of the new black militancy, but it was neither strategy nor tactic. It was a scream of protest, a cry of despair.

Just as the riots demonstrated to the leaders of the movement their lack of contact with the ghetto masses, their efforts to work in the North revealed a lack of suitable tools and strategy. The movement's tools had been forged in the South, where the target was visible and the issues were clear. Its technique of direct action was suited to confront the South's openly racist law and custom, but not racism disguised by pious statements and devious ways. Experiences now in the North with so-called liberal institutions, with labor unions and neighborhood schools, with City Hall and local citizens groups, revealed how deep and pervasive ran the underground rivers of white racism in America.

When Dr. Martin Luther King went to organize the movement in Chicago, he found that the enemy was in effect an entire political system, controlled by a Richard Daley and cleverly camouflaged with a few Blacks. You cannot march against that. It is too diffuse. Instead he marched in some neighborhoods to protest segregation in housing. But even there the issue was

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hard to isolate and dramatize, for no law explicitly forces people into the ghetto.

The difficulties Dr. King encountered in Chicago illustrate the problems of mass activity in the North. A movement, after all, is people—men and women on the go, heading somewhere. To be stirred to action and drawn into the movement, people need specific issues to fight for. These issues should be susceptible to a campaign utilizing large numbers, for numbers give visibility to the action and courage to the participants. The movement must reach those at the bottom, the hungry and the deprived, and offer them a solution to their deprivation which they themselves can see as a solution. To involve them and to enlist wider public support, the issues should be fairly clear-cut. Unfortunately, Northern racism is seldom clear-cut.

Everybody, deep in his heart, where he does not have to admit it to anyone but himself, is forced to acknowledge that something is wrong with a law that permits you to buy scissors in one part of a store but denies you the right to buy a hamburger in another part of it. The injustice there is clear. Less clear is the injustice done to a child who is being given an inferior, segregated education, not because of the law, but because of where he lives. It is difficult to dramatize. It is hard to present the issue to the upholders of the status quo in such a way that they have to admit that the situation is wrong. The logic is not self-evident, the reasoning is more involved, research and documentation are needed. Fighting de facto segregation in the North, civil rights leaders challenged the gerrymandering of school boundaries, but the difficulties of

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applying pressure on this kind of discrimination were deeply frustrating.

Frustrating also, after all the fine talk of black pride and black power, was the discovery that our ranks and our tools were depleted. We had gone through all that black-is-beautiful business, we had affirmed our identity and driven the white folks out... and then we found that when the white folks left, the money left. The help and leadership they had given was gone. As the sense of frustration mounted we turned against our white friends. We were a little like the coward who beats his wife because he has been humiliated in front of her. He feels driven to assert himself to someone, so it is she now who gets bullied.

It was soon clear, as the movement turned to the Northern scene, that the days of stirring marches were gone. An army can move along fine and with fervor until it finds itself on enemy territory. Then it must break its ranks in strategic maneuvers; it must dig in and reconnoiter. The troops scatter in twos and threes, some into the foxholes, some out as scouts, some probing for mines, others aloft in planes and helicopters. War is not dramatic then. War is not spiritual or exciting or beautiful. It is hell. For now the enemy, the unseen enemy, is all around. He is everywhere—maybe lurking behind those boulders, within that thicket, moving up behind you in that swamp. You cannot just charge forward over the hill. Alone and vulnerable you wait and peer and listen.

Like the Vietcong, the enemy in the North is in disguise and everywhere. He is the grocer who gives you credit, smiling in your face, and then overcharges

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you. He is the banker who takes your money, who even may hire black tellers and make speeches about racial equality, but then refuses to give you a mortgage on your house or business. He is the politician who comes around buying you beer and making promises, only to sell you out everything he votes in City Hall or Congress. You learn then that the thicker the battle, the thinner the line. You learn that you cannot march round Jericho and blow your trumpets and have the walls come tumbling down. You cannot do that because there are no walls — at least none that you can see.

So the bitterness that blossomed in the second half of the 1960's did not come because black America had turned to a new goal, but because the enemy now seemed so hard to engage. It was not because our direction had shifted toward separatism or black nationalism or revolution, for in reality it had not. The frustration that vented itself in words of hate and in burning city blocks was not the rage of the revolutionary who would destroy the system. It was the rage of essentially moderate black America that still wanted, as always, a way in.

In the last analysis every strategy and technique has been aimed at this one goal: to find a way in. Those who shout for the destruction of the system are not Black, but white. It is children of the white middle and upper class who are spouting Marx and Mao. Black America has wanted of the system only one thing: to be part of it. But the way to achieve this now seemed unclear. The broad road along which a movement could march had ended, leaving only crisscrossing pathways as confusing as a network of jungle trails.

2

Black Violence: What It Is and What It Is Not

White America heard the death knell of the non-violent civil rights movement in the sirens of Watts, the sniper fire of Cleveland, in the rhetoric of black power militants. Always ready to stereotype the Blacks and lump them all together, it fearfully concluded that the movement had "gone violent"—that the use of terror had replaced the uses of persuasion, that a program of violence had succeeded the search for peaceful, legal change.

It is important to examine the extent to which there is any truth to this assessment—important not only for white America, but also for us. For by our own acts and words, by our own anger and pride, we can be duped into assuming that we have established alternative modes of action, that violence can be a workable strategy should we choose to use it. Seeking to scare whitey we can fool ourselves and end up believing that our angry, bitter threats can constitute a

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program. We can delude ourselves into thinking that our violence, actual or potential, represents some new departure rather than being the mirror only of the violence of white America.

The Surfacing of Rage

As the civil rights movement died, something came alive. Black America, though stumbling in disarray and divisiveness, was coming alive. In the vehemence of our words and acts, a new energy was evident. Just as it frightened the whites, it startled and invigorated us. Whatever definitions we worked up for black power, political, economic, or social, its essence was this: the waking up of black America—to heightened expectations and rekindled hopes.

In this awakening, black America became more acutely aware of the nature of the obstacles it faced. The affronts and hypocrisies of the system rubbed now on nerves that seemed suddenly more raw. Awareness grew, sensitive new antennae picking up what was going on in the schools and on the job, with City Hall and with the police. Blacks began to open their eyes to the shell game life was playing with them: Now you see it, now you don't. Now you have it, now you don't. We began to see how the game was played, how carefully contrived and executed it was. We began to perceive how the system, while giving us new opportunities with one hand, snatched them back with the other. Pass a law, make speeches, but don't vote the funds, don't implement the program. Make a Supreme Court decision, proclaim it with fanfare, but don't enforce desegregation. All institutions from Congress to labor

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unions seemed engaged in this shell game with its con-man patter and sleight of hand. Even the power of organized religion was now shadowy as an ally; except for a few individual clerics it had retreated to the safety of its pulpits and pews, reserving militancy for Sunday sermons.

This new black sensitivity to the workings of the system did not breed faith, charity, or resignation. The answer, of course, was anger, deep and strong. The black man's historic supply of tolerance and Job-like patience suddenly neared its limits. And where the supply ran out, and the anger was made manifest, white America cried out in moral indignation that the civil rights movement was turning violent.

Mistaking rage for strategy, the white man sensed in the land the specter of insurrection, civil war. He saw the burning, he listened to the Rap Browns, and he mistook our reaction for new initiatives. In shock and fear and self-pity he saw it as a new offensive rather than a reflection of his own racial violence. He saw it as a deliberate tactic, a brand-new un-American phenomenon, as if trained revolutionaries had suddenly landed on his shores. He seemed to forget that long, bloody centuries of beatings, killings, and threats had well acquainted black folk with the uses of force. It did not occur to him that black violence was a direct result of white violence, that it was the inevitable, and largely individual, response to his own brutality.

Even those whites perceptive enough to sense the causal relationship between white violence and black retaliation tended to see white violence only in terms of the slavery of the past or of the isolated aberrations

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of a Bull Connor or Jim Clark. Few recognized that white violence was both current and widespread. In every major city Blacks continued to be harassed and assaulted. This is why no discussion of black violence can be undertaken without reference to white America's shield and defender: the police. And this is why, as black America woke up and racial tensions became overt, we focused more and more sharply on the issue of the police.

In almost every case of major urban riot it was a police incident that triggered the rage of the Blacks. The Kerner Commission (the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) found that:

Almost invariably the incident that ignites disorder arises from police action. Harlem, Watts, Newark and Detroit — all the major outbursts of recent years — were precipitated by arrests of Negroes by white police for minor offenses.

And this pattern continues. The Augusta riot of 1970, which lost six black lives to unjustified police fire, was precipitated by the black community's fury at the death of a black brother in the notorious city jail.

When the riot epidemic subsided and was succeeded by groups calling in a more systematic fashion for the necessity of guns, their call too related directly to police action. In virtually every situation where Blacks have advocated the carrying of arms, it has been for the purposes of self-defense against the violence of white America's cops. In consequence, the issue of black "violence" cannot be understood separately from that of the police, their practices and policies and their relations with the ghetto community.

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The Keepers of the Peace

Of all the difficulties assailing his life, it is the conduct of the police that most immediately and perhaps most deeply provokes the black man's rage. For it adds to his other degradations the corrosion of fear. It strikes at the core of his sense of self, of what dignity he has been able to muster and maintain.

If the problem were merely one of aberrant behavior on the part of the police, it would be easier to confront. Unfortunately it is deeper than that. We must remember that we cannot lay the blame entirely at the feet of prejudiced cops or mismanaged precincts, for they are caught in the middle. They are by definition the keepers of the status quo. It is not their job to legislate, to institute social reform, or to open doors of opportunity; their job is only to enforce existing custom. It is not only the Blacks who are paying the price for white America's neglect of the ghetto and its indifference to the intolerable conditions there. The police pay a price, too. While white America looks the other way in its pursuit of profit and pleasure, it is the police who are expected to keep the lid on the ghetto's seething cauldron of frustration. They are expected to defuse the dynamite that is stockpiling there amidst the poverty and the squalor, the despair and disease, so that white America can forget about it and sleep easy in its suburbs.

And, we must admit, it is not an easy job. It is not comfortable to be an army of occupation. James Baldwin recognized this when he wrote:

It is hard, on the other hand, to blame the policeman... for being such a perfect representative of

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the people he serves. There are few things under heaven more unnerving than the silent, accumulating contempt and hatred of a people. He moves through Harlem, therefore, like an occupying soldier in a bitterly hostile country; which is precisely what, and where he is, and is the reason he walks in twos and threes.

This is his job. But what makes it worse is that he has neither the training nor the resources for it. The strains upon him increase, and he expresses them with mounting frustration and an understandable, though misplaced, hostility. Required to be society's arm to control the Blacks through fear, he himself walks in fear. While the demands upon him have risen, his rewards have not. Even a top-grade patrolman in New York earns less than a skilled-craft worker. Poor pay, of course, does not attract high quality. Not only has the educational level of police applicants dropped, but the training afforded them has been often restricted. The need for immediate manpower in the inner-city has sometimes pulled recruits out of training programs after only two or three days. It also makes careful selection impossible. A recent report from New York revealed that 2,000 men were put into uniform and out on the streets, armed with guns and authority, not only before they could be trained, but without even the necessary background investigation having been made. Added to this situation is the fact that it is not the seasoned patrolmen, but the newest and rawest recruits who are given the ghetto beats.

The sorry catalogue of the policeman's difficulties does not end there, as we well know. He is often heavily burdened with racial prejudice. James Baldwin spoke

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of him as the "perfect representative of the people he serves." I would modify that, for the people he serves are also white liberals; yet, the policeman too often displays toward the Blacks the attitude of the red-necked bigot. Exacerbating his hundreds of daily encounters in the inner-city is the contempt he feels for those whom it is his duty, supposedly, to protect.

The epithet "pig" hurled at them from the lips of privileged white youngsters, who have been spared the daily indignities visited upon the black man, seems to make a mockery of our rage. What is virtually a game to them as they bait the cops, is a harsh reality to us and one they cannot know. Rioting students and long-haired hippies may incur the wrath of the police, may even provoke some measure of brutality, but it is by choice. They can always run back to suburbia, cut their hair, or call their parents. Therefore they cannot really know what it is like for us who cannot retreat. And it is not easy for a black man to convey it to them or to the rest of white America. For still deep within the white psyche is that comfortable assurance that the authority and might of civil order are on their side. For them always available and generally benign is this source of succor and impartial justice. The neighborhood cop is there on call, to befriend and to protect. That confidence is undergirding and taken for granted.

It requires of whites a valiant effort to imagine what life, and one's own sense of self, must be like if that figure of civil authority is not benevolent but arbitrary, hostile, punitive. Those of my white friends who have spent some time in totalitarian countries like Spain or Russia, where police power is often unchecked, have

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a closer inkling. An incident or two has revealed to them what it is like to be a prey of the police, at the mercy of their whims and without easy recourse. They have then recognized that one does not need to experience acts of outright physical brutality in order to feel victimized and helpless. As wounding as blows is the sense of one's own powerlessness.

A black man need not be roughed up or manhandled to feel degraded by the police. Language alone violates one's manhood. It is not just a matter of being called "boy" instead of "mister"; it is the whole contemptuous tone that is too often employed, the string of abusive epithets that can be provoked if you are not sufficiently cringing and servile, and, hanging above it always, the threat of undeserved punishment. That is why we black drivers tend to pay more attention to traffic regulations and speed limits than our fellow citizens, for we fight shy of any infringement that could deliver us to the abuse of the white cop.

Many practices of the police on patrol, though justifiable in the eyes of the authorities, strike us as gestures of contempt. You are a teenager standing on a street corner passing the time with some friends; where else, after all, do you have to go? But the cop comes along and orders you off. You look suspicious to him, you are "loitering"; not even your own crummy block belongs to you. Maybe feeling sore or "uppity" you sass him back—and risk a booking. In the escalating battle for self-assertion between police and ghetto juveniles, arrests on vague charges such as loitering or disturbing the peace or "suspicion of robbery" increasingly occur. They build a record for the boy which

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the police may find useful, but they also generate deep resentment.

Or you are walking home at night, just walking along, and you are stopped by the police. You are halted and questioned, asked your name, your address, what you are doing, sometimes even searched, as if you were a suspected criminal, a public menace. The practice of "stop and frisk" is a common one, we know; after all the ghetto is a dangerous place—hostile territory. Though we cannot tell white folk this is "police brutality," such incidents hurt. They arouse deep rancor, for they deprive the black man of the one thing he has left—his self-respect, his dignity.

Even without abusive language such incidents are galling. One night I left my downtown office at 11:30 after working late. I was walking along the street, briefcase in hand, heading to my car at a parking lot about a block away. I was not alone on the street; there were whites walking as well. But it was I, not any of them, that a policeman stopped. He demanded to know what I was doing out so late, and ordered me to open my briefcase. I refused and he threatened to arrest me. Continuing to walk toward my car, I said, "Go ahead and arrest me or let me go home." The situation was tense, an argument was mounting, and only when he saw the low number on my license plate did he cool off. But it took me longer to cool off, for I resented it as a citizen and as a man. I resented the fact that because I am black and was out late I was automatically suspect.

No brutality occurred there. No brutality necessarily takes place when a cop flags you down and questions

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you because you are driving in the company of a white woman, or your own light-skinned wife. The police cannot be charged with brutality when they invade your home while conducting random neighborhood checks. Though technically illegal, the practice of "aggressive preventive patrols" is a common one. There is no question of brutality in the mere use of police dogs, but the sight of them is a bitter one to the Black. There is no "brutality" in any of these cases, but you feel threatened, you feel degraded and humiliated, and within you a cold core of resentment grows — and the urge to strike back.

Color the Violence White

When, in that context of humiliation, physical violence is employed, as it often is, you feel a double measure of fury. For it is like kicking a man when he is down, and there is no rage like that of the powerless when subjected to unnecessary and arbitrary force. That the police employ such force against the black citizen is no news to us, but the findings of recent presidential commissions and surveys make it common knowledge to the country at large. The use of undue violence at arrest has been documented, the employment of third-degree methods in interrogations has been made public, and so has the meting out of brutal "alley court" justice where the police turn prosecutor, judge, and sometimes executioner.

In a recent study of police practices conducted by the American Civil Liberties Union here in Washington, D. C., observers counted twenty acts of physical brutality in 850 eight-hour patrols. Now this may not

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seem like much; and some have concluded from this that the problem cannot be severe because this figure represents only 1% of all the encounters between police and individuals made on those patrols. In fact, however, given the total number of patrols, this represents 15 such incidents a day, and over 5,000 in a year. All these acts, furthermore, were committed in the presence of the ACLU observer, which one would expect to be somewhat inhibiting. At any rate, you as an individual need be subjected only to one such experience and the memory will last you a lifetime.

A sorry episode in nearby Alexandria this past year presents a neat case study in the brutality of the cop on the beat, the insensitivity of his superiors, and the difficulty we face in working toward a long-term solution. A white policeman broke up a street football game in the black neighborhood. When the black boys cursed him for doing so, he started to make some arrests. The upshot was that he pistol-whipped a fourteen-year-old boy who, he claimed, had jumped him, though the boy later maintained that he was trying to get away. The black community was enraged and a brief spate of fire-bombing ensued. A representative of the local Urban League organized a peaceful demonstration in front of the police station to demand that the officer be dismissed.

The attitude of the police chief was clear when he made the statement that the officer "actually was justified to shoot people under the circumstances." The department's position was further illustrated by its response to an Urban League proposal for a series of discussions on police-community relations. Six Blacks

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and six members of the department were to participate in a panel, a modest and peaceful enough proposal. The series floundered when no officers could be found to take part, and the police chief said that he certainly could not force them to. In this typically Southern town at the edge of our nation's capital the police apparently felt that Blacks are not even worth talking with.

The black community has long learned to accept the fact that, even aside from the physical harassment, the police operate according to a double standard of law enforcement. Although the ghetto needs police protection more than the whites, it receives less. The U. S. Commission on Civil Rights revealed that in a major city like Cleveland the police took four times as long to respond to robbery calls from the black district than from white areas. Statistics from Detroit and other major cities also prove—as we Blacks have always suspected—that the police are slow in responding to emergencies in the ghetto. The perpetrators of robberies, brawls, rapes are pursued with less energy when the victims are black. One can only conclude that to the police, as to the larger society they represent, crime is of a different hue, to be expected and more tolerated when it is only Blacks who are affected. It is simpler to walk away, to let the Blacks fight it out among themselves. And this the ghetto-dweller deeply resents. It was, remember, a white cop's indifference to a fight between two black youths, his refusal both to apprehend the attacker and to seek help for the victim, that sparked the riot that tore apart Plainfield in the summer of 1967.

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The apparent indifference of police to ghetto safety is particularly galling in the area of organized crime. Here society's contempt for the black community is made crystal clear. It is spelled out in the permissiveness with which it deals with the pimps and the prostitutes, the numbers racket and the dope rings, as long as these restrict their activities to black turf. Big money is being made there, white money, Mafia money—and police money, too. It is being made off black men and women and off the lives of their children. Not only does white America allow this to happen, but it takes it as further proof of the inferiority, the innate criminality of the black man. This cuts deep. Even the mildest, most moderate Uncle Tom is incensed at the failure of the police to stamp out organized crime.

All this, be it police misconduct or police inaction, takes its toll—economic, social, psychological. But in no way have the police more clearly exemplified to the Black the violence of the white world than when the toll is a human life. No circumstances can excuse to the Blacks the fatal shootings of suspects in the ghetto. It is as if the bark of the patrolman's gun were the final, curt, authoritative statement of the white man's urge and the white man's intent.

In 1969, my first year on City Council, six persons in the District of Columbia were killed by police "in the line of duty." All of them were Black. There were more such killings the year before, and the year before that, and the year before that, searing into black consciousness while white America was largely oblivious. Tampa in June of 1967 blazed with the fury this arouses. Pursuing a fleeing black youth suspected

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of burglary, running after him along a high wooden fence, the cop fired at him, killed him. And the Blacks of the community, finding the boy hanging dying from the fence, went on a rampage that was the riot of Tampa.

You do not need to be a fleeing burglary suspect to lose your life at the hands of the police. An associate of mine in the Urban League, Horace Morris, happened to be in New York for a few days at the time the riot erupted in his hometown of Newark. When he went home to his family the shooting had died down, but the city was still under siege, the police everywhere, with occasional sounds of gunshot. Horace was walking with his stepfather around the corner to his brother's house when it happened—his stepfather was gunned down by the police. There was no curfew on at the time, nor had his stepfather in any way been involved in the riot. But he was black, he was on the street, he was therefore presumably the enemy. No warning, just a police car coming around the corner shooting.

It should be evident now to the general public what we have always known: that police can murder a black man, and that they do. Thanks to the bungling ineptitude of the Chicago police raid on the Black Panther apartment in December 1969, and thanks to the renown of their victims, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, it is now a fact confirmed by the white judiciary itself. Until now police have been fairly successful in explaining away such acts as "justifiable homicide." Our rage went unheeded, for white America always serenely assumed that the cop was always right. But in this highly publicized case the federal grand jury

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held an investigation and issued a report which is extraordinary—not because it told us anything new, but because it documented, finally, the type of white violence that shadows black lives. For once, the police story was challenged and proved to be a tissue of lies. They claimed they met heavy resistance as they made their pre-dawn arms raid, but the jury found that of the nearly one hundred shots fired only one was a Panther bullet. They claimed evidence that Fred Hampton was drugged, that the surviving Panthers had attempted police murder, but the jury found these claims totally false. So damning were the jury's conclusions that the police would have been tried and certainly indicted had the Panthers not held to their stubborn refusal to testify.

White students, young radicals, peace and anti-draft demonstrators are gaining some firsthand experience now of police lawlessness and brutality—from the Chicago streets of the 1968 convention to the tear-gassed campuses of 1970. But to us Blacks this still seems pale beside the death that can stalk our brothers. While whites cry out for their own children who are bruised and beaten in the melees they provoke, black youths are still getting killed, wiped out, shot in the back like the six young men in the Augusta disturbance this May 1970, and we hear no comparable outcry. Many Blacks, therefore, have concluded that they must see to their own protection.

The Call for Self-Defense

White violence, as personified in the police, was, of course, nothing new to black America; what was new

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in the mid-60's was the awakening defiance. As the spirit of militancy spread, it was clear that black America was no longer ready to accept beatings and hosings by the police. That day was past. No longer would it tolerate the brutality it had accepted for so long because it could not fight back. Now Blacks began, quite simply, to do that: to fight back.

We have noted what triggered the riots — resentment against white violence. Blacks could not win, of course. Bricks and molotov cocktails are not much help against the armed might of the police and the national guard. But the fury was real and it sounded the demise of nonviolence as a popular inspirational movement. Not because the Blacks had decided on a new strategy, not because they had chosen to make war on America, but because they had concluded that they could not fight white brutality by lying down. They could not win equality by singing and praying. The police dogs, cattle-prods, and firehoses of Birmingham had proved that.

It was time, they felt, for the black man to protect himself. The militant organizations proclaimed the doctrine of self-defense; and CORE in its 1966 convention made it official. In so doing, CORE sought to relate self-defense to the main current of the movement and distinguish it from mere belligerence: "...concepts of nonviolence and self-defense are not contradictory; non-violent meaning nonaggressive, but not precluding the natural, constitutional and inalienable right of self-defense."

In Watts, following the 1965 uprising, black residents organized the Community Alert Patrol. Supported largely by federal funds, the Patrol sought to

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protect the black community from police harassment and brutality. It observed and reported on police behavior and informed black suspects of their legal rights.

Subsequently Huey Newton and Bobby Seale expanded the CAP concept. Forming the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, they instituted armed patrols. The Panthers based the legality of this program on the Second Amendment to the Constitution which accorded "the right of the people to keep and bear arms." When incidents of police harassment arose, these patrols would arrive on the scene bearing not only guns but law books, so that they could spell out for the police and their victims what sections of legal code, if any, were being violated by the arresting officer.

As time went on the concept of self-defense became more explosive. Ambiguities of interpretation came to the fore, as did the very real problem of where to draw the line between minimal self-protection and retaliation against the police. Militants attempted to develop an ideological basis for resistance. This effort was triggered here in Washington by a particular incident in the summer of 1968, a black man's shooting of a white police officer.

When the son of Mr. White, who is black, saw two policemen trying to arrest and handcuff his father, he ran up. In the ensuing struggle he grabbed one of their service revolvers and shot them both, killing one. The Black United Front took this occasion to challenge the police monopoly on justifiable homicide. After three days of nonstop caucusing they issued a statement:

The methods of self-defense used by the family charged with the alleged slaying of the honky cop is

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justifiable homicide in the same sense that police are allowed to kill black people and call it justifiable homicide.

For years the police had been killing Blacks and saying that it was justified "in the line of duty." American society did not consider such killings murder any more than war is murder. Now the Black United Front took this logic of violence one step further, arguing that if you kill a cop in self-defense, that homicide is as justifiable as if you killed anyone else in self-defense. The concept of self-defense is hardly new in American tradition. The black militants felt they were taking their place within that tradition: I have the right to defend myself if someone is attacking me, be he doctor, lawyer, or Indian chief.

The reaction of the white community was predictable. In a furor of indignation they wanted Rev. Walter Fauntroy, who was a member of the BUF and who was then my predecessor as Vice Chairman of the City Council, to resign; and members of Congress added their weight to this pressure. Fauntroy, who had not been present at the BUF deliberations but felt constrained to display unity and support for them, urged the public to "look beyond the rhetoric" of the statement and examine the context in which it was made.

The whites raged: You cannot give people a free license to make war on cops. Yet the white man's myopia when it comes to violence, the colored glasses through which he views homicide, was ironically evident within barely more than a week, when Theodore Lawson, a black Washingtonian, was shot down

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by the police because his car happened to be parked near the scene of a robbery, and because after considerable police harassment he had driven off. This was one of the most indefensible acts of murder that Washington police had committed, yet the white community that had yelled so hard over the dead policeman raised scarcely a murmur.

When I was asked, as I repeatedly was, to express my views on the BUF statement, I maintained that you could not get anywhere by declaring all-out war on the cops. Retaliation, pure and simple, was no answer: the only result would be the killing of more Blacks. Furthermore, with emotions running so high, the timing was poor for the formulation of any such policy.

Yet within myself I knew that the timing for such a statement would never be right for the white community. It would never be right because the vast majority of the white public would never believe—would never let itself believe that the police murder people. To the middle American, the mere presence of a policeman in any given circumstance is self-justifying, and so is his behavior. It is important to the white man's psychological well-being to believe that if police kill it is "in the line of duty." His conscience seeks to shield him from the knowledge that police can murder. If every now and then, as in the Chicago Panther case, evidence to that fact penetrates his defenses, he encapsulates it, treats it as an exception. He could not live with that awareness, for he would not only feel guilty, but he would begin to fear the police and perhaps feel threatened himself. It is easier to refuse belief than to change the problem. Even some mod-

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erate, middle-class Blacks shy away from that awareness because they like to think that the police differentiate between the Black who is a criminal and the Black who is not.

Because of their blindness to police behavior, white America could not understand the black call for self-defense. Still less could it surmise that this call was not so much a declaration of intent as an expression of defiance. Instead it saw it as a signal for black violence. And it assumed that such violence was organized, whereas in actual fact black violence, when it does erupt, is by its nature an individual act.

Violence: An Individual Matter

Contrary to the impression of white America, no black *movement* on the U. S. racial scene has gone violent. What violence has occurred has been the violence of individual acts of frustration, not the violence of collective policy. Its nature has been spontaneous, not programmed.

On the other hand, nonviolence, as we have practiced it, can operate only as a movement. It can work only with organization and numbers—numbers to give you a sense of purpose, security, and motivation. You do not walk all by yourself against those clubs and firehoses, you walk hundreds strong. You walk because you believe that your numbers will have a dramatic effect. You can take the humiliation and the brutality because of the spiritual unity you have built with the brothers beside you, because of the psychological preparation you have made together, and because of the sense of security numbers can

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offer. You cannot, unless you are a saint or a Gandhi, practice nonviolence on an individual basis to achieve change. The person who is nonviolent in an organized group may not be so when he is yanked from his automobile by an abusive cop. When reactions of violence become collective it does not mean that they are organized. When large numbers get actively aroused, even when a riot explodes, people may spur each other on, but the action is basically individual, atomized, spontaneous.

In the mid-60's large numbers of Blacks began to see nonviolence in a new and somewhat contemptuous light. They felt that all that praying and marching and talking around the conference table amounted to nothing more than saying, "Look, whitey, we're protesting, but we'll protest only within the limits you find acceptable. We are doing it so that your soul will come alive. But don't be afraid, we won't harm you — we want your support."

These new voices were saying that the use of non-violence was just playing the white man's game. And ... "We've been playing it for fourteen generations and not a single real problem has been solved. Now the white man and his limits and his conscience be damned. We don't care how scared you get, whitey. Learn what fear feels like. If the streets aren't safe for you, I don't care, because they are not safe for me. If they aren't safe for me because of the cops, they can be unsafe for you because of my black brothers. I want you to know what it's like to walk on unsafe streets. Maybe then you'll wake up."

Now this defiance is hardly a strategy; it is an emo-

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tional reaction. It is an impassioned cry of rage, not a strategy. For what could naked human exasperation achieve in the face of America's armed might? As a policy it would be unrealistic to the point of being suicidal. And yet...and yet there is something operative here that is deeply human and that in its effect on Black and white alike may be part of our salvation.

Once, when I was a boy, my mother was whipping me for something. I must have thought that the punishment was undeserved, because what I remember most clearly is the anger I felt. I was so mad, as she was whipping me, that I wanted her to keep it up. I was so mad that I did not mind the pain; in fact it almost felt good. And she began to realize that she was not making her point, that I did not give a damn any more. Now I was not a difficult child. I did not run around with girls or stay out late; I shined shoes, sold papers, studied hard, tried to be polite. But now in a real sense I was defying my mother, because I was not responding the way I was supposed to—with pain and remorse. "Okay," I thought, "if you are going to beat me, go ahead and beat me as hard as you want and as long as you want." My mother became totally frustrated as she saw that what she was doing was not having the desired effect. She gave up in puzzlement and exasperation, and when my father came home she turned me over to him and we had a long talk, man to man.

Beatings can become futile, self-defeating, if one beats a child too often and he loses the fear of it. That is what America has been doing to the black man—she keeps beating him. Perhaps we are approaching

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now the last stages of that. We seem to be reaching the point where the accumulating anger creates more pressure on us than the fear or the pain—when it drives us beyond fear, beyond pain, even beyond reason, when we become so frenzied and fed up that we say, "By God, then, come and get me. Let's have this confrontation. Out in the open. You have all the power and all the law is behind you, but you are wrong. Here I am, standing up, come get me. If you're going to shoot me, then shoot. I dare you."

When Huey Newton taunted the police on the courthouse steps in Oakland, when he stood there with his gun and challenged them and called them pigs, most people saw only his swaggering bravado. I cannot pretend to read his thoughts but I believe that, in part at least, this same frenetic desperation was seizing him, as it seizes all who seek release from terror in a final convulsive claim to manhood. This is the point where persecution breaks down, where it backfires: when it drives the victim beyond fear.

As I have said, I was a pretty orderly soul as a boy; but one day I had a fight. Some friends and I were walking along the street, when Posey Foster started picking on me. Now Posey Foster was the neighborhood bully, louder and bigger than anyone else, and up to that point he had beaten up everybody but me. Though he had not taken me on yet, I knew he resented me because I was something of a leader and a potential rival. I had tried to get along with him because I was afraid of him and hoped I could keep avoiding a fight.

Then that dreaded moment came: he started in on

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me, taunting me. I kept walking along, scared, thinking of the guys he had knocked out, but he swung in front of me and made me stop. He shoved in close to me, jeering, pushing, almost spitting in my face as he talked. Then I noticed that I was not backing away. I did not back away because suddenly I did not mind it any more, I felt ready for him. He talked longer than he had intended because he, too, began to see what was happening to me: I was not going to start the fight but I was now ready for it. I wanted him to hit me, I was waiting. And when he finally struck me, that blow actually felt good and I just tied right into him. I climbed all over him, I wrestled him down and started pounding him into the ground. We fought hard and I hurt, but those bruises felt satisfying. The blood flowed from my nose all down my shirt, but I was proud of the blood and the bruises, for I had overcome something—I had overcome my fear. I finally had to be pulled off, and I had no trouble after that with Posey Foster.

Now I know that I could not have beaten him ordinarily. But he got me ready, he worked me up to the point where I really wanted to demolish him. He had always ruled by fear; and when I was no longer afraid I craved with every ounce of my strength to challenge him totally.

That is what America has been doing: she has been getting the Blacks ready for a confrontation. She has been pushing them—pushing to the point where they will not be afraid of the cops any more, or of jails, or phoney trials, or concentration camps. To the point where they will keep coming, in a wild defiance, not

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minding the blood and the bruises, and the uneven odds.

I was not going to start the fight with Posey Foster, but when he struck that first blow, and I lit in, I felt totally justified. I felt warranted in using any methods I could; I had been bullied and afraid long enough. It was no boxing match, it was all-out war. If I had seen a stick lying near I would have grabbed it and beaten him over the head with it. And if it had been a rock I might have killed him. I would have been remorseful later, but if it had been necessary at the time I think I would have done it. I simply was not going to let him beat me, and I would have used just about any means available.

Yes, that is the way much of black America feels. "Sure, it is wrong to burn," it says. "I know it is wrong. But I cannot fight you according to your rules; you set them up and I can never win that way. And, by God, you have treated me so badly for so long that whatever I do to you — you deserve it."

When the violence of self-defense leads us beyond the fear that has shackled us, then there is undeniably a measure of health in it — the full-blooded pride of expressing our anger, however impractical or impolitic it may be to do so. Given the chains that the centuries have hung on our minds and our bodies, we need a degree of defiance, a journey beyond fear, if we are to move in new self-respect. Our contempt for our oppressors is too great for us to grovel any more. What we claim as our rights we claim not on bended knee, but standing tall in righteous anger.

Yet, in the end, I cannot condone the violence of

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gunfire. I recognize the desperate need for black self-respect. Knowing my own anger, I can fully understand the impulse to lash back at white brutality with a fist in the face of a cop or with a sniper shot. But the price is simply too high—too high in white reprisal and repression. And there are alternative routes to liberation. I pity those whose inner resources are so meager as to make them resort to a rifle. Paths to take us beyond fear and self-hatred are many and varied. Some will find the way in local organization and the fight for community control; some in the task of voter registration, as they press forward refusing to be intimidated.

Perhaps incidents of violent black response to white racism are as inevitable as they are dangerous. We need, in any event, to remember that they are essentially individual acts. They are not a program. They are not, and cannot be, a vehicle for collective strategy, although our defiance or our wishful thinking may delude us into thinking they can.

The Myth of Revolution

When violence decks itself out as strategy, it borrows the name of revolution. We have seen how the black power movement brought to the surface the age-old angers of American Blacks. Black power enabled them to release, at least in words, their rage at a system that simultaneously promised and denied them the chance to be men. That, in the last analysis, is all it did offer them—words. It equipped them with neither strategy nor weapons, only a soapbox and the alarmed attention of the American public. And so, faced with the intran-

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sigence of white racism and galled by their own powerlessness, the voices of black power spokesmen became increasingly strident. Although they had no program for carrying it out, they began to borrow the language of revolution.

"We are at war," shouted Rap Brown, "get yourself some guns." "We are moving into open guerilla warfare in the United States. We have no alternative but to use aggressive violence," announced Stokely Carmichael. Eldridge Cleaver threatened a "guerilla resistance movement that will amount to a second Civil War." The radical voices competed in flamboyance as they learned that the more extreme the utterance the wider coverage it would get in the national media.

Even some of the less flamboyant argued that change in America can come only through violence, and that violence has always been a motivating force behind change in America. Indeed, United States history can be read as a chronicle of bloodshed and insurrection from the early settler rebellions to the Molly Maguires and the Wobblies, from the vigilantes on the frontier to the Ku Klux Klan in the South. One can conclude without distorting the facts that violence is the American way of settling differences and seeking one's place in the sun. It can even be argued that violence was necessary in order to get the Civil Rights Act: that it was not the peaceful demonstrations that goaded Congress to pass it, but the ferocity of the whites in hosing the marchers, in bombing the children in Birmingham. American society is crisis-oriented, quicker in its response to the drastic and the brutal than to other pressures.

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The rationale for violent revolution looked beyond the domestic scene to the world stage. Black power ideologists began to interpret America's racial situation in the light of anti-colonialist struggles in the Third World. They looked at Algeria, Vietnam, Cuba, Angola. They travelled, they read, and they concluded that the fight was essentially the same everywhere, the struggle for self-determination. Like their brothers abroad, American Blacks were subjected to colonialist exploitation and brutalization, and like them their goal must be national liberation. The vocabulary of nationalism lent itself with superficial facility to the domestic crisis and added to the revolutionary aura of angry black slogans and harangues.

This revolutionary talk frightened white America, of course. It especially distressed her when the purveyors of it travelled abroad and spoke out in foreign capitals and in the halls of the United Nations. But it was in essence, and continues to be, nothing more than an exercise in semantics. However much one talks of revolutionary national liberation, it remains a game of words and emotional indulgence, as long as there is no way of carrying it out.

Ghetto youths can take up guns, berets, uniforms; they can march around and drill till doomsday. Black students at Ivy League colleges can occupy campus buildings at gunpoint and get their pictures on the front pages; and Panthers and RAMs can continue to stockpile weapons. It is all essentially a charade. For however much they brandish them, their guns have no other use than as a symbolic declaration that Blacks are now ready for self-defense. Despite all the threatening

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language, no program of offensive violence has yet been put forward. The simple and obvious reason for this is that such a program could not be mounted or carried out. There exists in this country neither basis nor scope for revolution. In the first place, American Blacks do not constitute a revolutionary mass, and in the second place, even if we did, we have no adequate base for revolutionary action against the power of the establishment.

Let us examine these two points briefly, for the romantic notion of revolution is so pervasive that it can confuse us as to the options that are actually open to us. Through the politics of protest this myth is affecting, at least subconsciously, many Americans: among whites it breeds fears that feed repression; among Blacks it is a wasteful delusion that keeps us from making an effective attack on the system. It diverts our strength and misuses our courage.

In spite of all the clenched-fist salutes and the paramilitary uniforms, black Americans are far from being molded into the cohesive revolutionary mass that is requisite for the overthrow of an established order. Their stake in the system is too high; their pitiful share in America's affluence too large. For all their relative poverty and misery and dislocation, the status quo yields them just enough change and just enough hope to keep them from uniting in revolt. They want a better life, but they are not ready yet to die for it. They have too much to lose.

You need a certain security about life to be willing to destroy it; that is why revolution is more in vogue among white radicals than among black. It is a function

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of the insecurity of the black man throughout his generations, that he is not willing to die for something he has not yet fully experienced. He is not ready to take the plunge from a ladder up which he has climbed so few rungs. Where each day is a battle for survival and each tomorrow a question mark, one wants above all to perpetuate life.

Although it is not in the mood of the times now to admit it, we are aware also that we have come a long way since the time when we were chattel, since the days when in the sight of the law we were only 60 per cent human. We are aware that this progress, inadequate but undeniable, could not have been achieved if we had fomented violence. Could we have won freedom from slavery by ourselves?—by force of arms? No, the very notion is ridiculous, for such action would have been suicidal. We did it by our wits, and by letting the whites fight it out among themselves.

In spite of the agonizingly slow pace, Blacks *are* getting more education and more dollars. We know that with adequate training we can qualify for a job and that even if we are paid less than whites, we can earn enough to live. We can hope to feed a family, acquire a home of sorts, a car. The dream is tarnished for the Blacks, but it is still there.

Here the colonial analogy with the Third World that the intellectual revolutionary is fond of making, breaks down. Colonized subjects are under the heel of a foreign force, an external system, from whose power they are excluded and against which they can unite. This is hardly the case for the Black in America, who by and large sees himself as part of the system. His anger

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is directed not as much against the system per se, as against the whites' manipulation of it. He does not want to wipe out the power of the establishment as much as he wants to be part of it. That kind of struggle is not total enough to call forth the total commitment and the willingness to sacrifice one's life that revolution requires.

If the Kerner Commission, in stating that America is divided into "two societies, black and white, separate and unequal," had recommended reinforcement of this separation and if the government had decided to institute apartheid, then, yes, then there might well be rebellion. For, as I repeat, the vast bulk of American Blacks want in, not out.

Faced with continued resistance to full black participation, black readiness to use violence has grown. A Louis Harris survey of March 1970 revealed that 31 per cent of the Blacks sampled felt that violence was necessary to achieve black goals, as compared to 21 per cent in a similar poll in 1966. Among black teenagers the figure was as high as 40 per cent of the total. Yet, these figures are misleading if judged without regard to the context of the wider society which itself, on a broad scale, has become more violent.

But black America is not ready for the barricades yet. It may become so, if all progress ceases and it loses hope. Then, should revolt occur, it would be an act not of strategy, but of desperation—of suicidal desperation, because it would be doomed to total crushing repression.

Not only do most Blacks not want revolution, but even if we did we could not mount one. The simple

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fact of the matter is that given the solidity, might, and pervasiveness of the established order revolution could not be organized.

Increasingly in the last few years we have seen the power of federal and state government at work dealing with disorders and with threats of disorders, real or imagined. We have seen the phalanxes of police move in, with their gas masks and their bayonets ready. We have seen the national guard converge, the armored trucks and tanks and helicopters. More effective yet is the power that we do not see or hear. More deadly to revolution than white America's occasional display of muscle is her quiet, constant hand on the throat and pulse of the ghetto.

A militarily weak minority can win a revolution only where it can engage in the hit-and-run tactics of guerilla warfare. For this it is necessary to have elbow-room, pockets of relatively inaccessible back-country to which the revolutionaries can retreat, and where they can establish bases for supplies and training. Mao's peasant army had the expanses of Northwestern China; and Castro's men the hills of the Sierra Maestre. The mountains of Kabylia and neighboring Tunisia gave refuge and sustenance to the Algerian rebels. But what do American Blacks have? For all the bold rhetoric of the Cleavers and the Carmichaels, of the RAMs and the Panthers and the countless groups who are brandishing their guns, they have precisely nowhere.

The ghetto is so policed — not only by the cops, but by all the other public institutions that function there — it is so bugged and tapped and tracked and reported on, that the Blacks cannot turn around without the

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whites knowing it. We like to think that the ghetto at least is ours; but the white man knows it better than we do. Knows it, not with any feel of identification or intimacy, but clinically, with detachment, the way a doctor knows a malignant tumor or a hunter the beat of his quarry. And here the Black is holed up, without room to maneuver, or to recruit, train, and equip his forces. For the whites the job of total counter-revolutionary repression is already half-done: the potential guerillas are completely encircled. The rest is as easy as shooting fish in a barrel.

As long as this is the case, talk of revolution is futile, and the black radicals who indulge in it are simply playing games. They are escaping from bitter realities into a world of fantasy, feeding on the empty stuff of dreams. They are squandering their strength in games of cops and robbers when they could be applying pressure with cunning and forethought to the levers which the system still provides. Ron Karenga, for all his nationalist trappings, recognized this lack of contact with reality when he observed: "Sometimes brothers get so hung up in the myth of revolution that they talk about bringing America to her knees and can't even wipe out one police station."

The truth of the matter is that if all the revolutionaries in America were to race out in the streets tonight, ready to die, that is what would happen—they would die. And tomorrow the revolution would be over. America would say it's too bad all those poor niggers had to die, and there would be a lot of funerals and a great deal of mourning. But the next day the President would still be in the White House, Congress would

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be in session, schools would be open, and the Star Spangled Banner would still be playing. The war in Vietnam would be going on, it would be business as usual in America. And that is a fact.

Even the so-called revolutionaries among us are, I think, aware of this. Although they do not admit it, they know, at some level of their consciousness, that if the battle is to be violent, a test of physical force, it is already lost. That is why no serious attempt has been made to organize a program of offensive violence. Men do not get together to commit suicide in groups. No leader is that powerful, no people that foolish. Blacks in America are hard-pressed, discouraged, and increasingly desperate; but they are not a horde of lemmings ready to head blindly to self-destruction.

While organized offensive black violence is a myth, it affects our search for black strategies today because of the impact it has had on the mind of white America. It has contributed to a climate of fear. White America has been frightened by the angry cries of revolution, both from her own radical children and from the Blacks. In reaction she has called for "law and order" at any cost. We Blacks must understand very clearly this mood and its dangers if we are to move effectively.

3

The Face of Law and Order

White Fear

If white Americans had learned to see us as we are, human beings like themselves with our individual burdens of hope, of fear, they could have understood our rage and our defiance. They might not have wished to accommodate to it, but they could have comprehended it. They could have understood our need for pride and grasped what black power meant to us. But as Ralph Ellison potently expressed, they never really saw us:

I am an invisible man....I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids — and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. ...When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination — indeed, everything and anything except me.

That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look

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through their physical eyes upon reality. . . . You wonder whether you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds. . . . You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it is seldom successful.

One might say that since 1947 when Ralph Ellison wrote those words, the black man has made himself more visible on the American stage. With the civil rights movement he strode from the wings toward stage center, key actor in a drama that engrossed and moved large portions of the audience. With the riots he caught the spotlight, captured the shocked attention of the public. He got their attention—but not their understanding. Having never known him, America could not judge his revolt with accuracy.

New stereotypes replaced the old on the screen of white consciousness. In the place of Amos 'n' Andy flashed now the image of a looting rioter. Step'n Fetchit suddenly became a ranting revolutionary. We were making more noise, but America was still not hearing us. She had to institute one presidential advisory commission after another to find out what we wanted. She could not just listen to us, she had to ask her white experts, her sociologists, urbanologists, psychologists, what our problems were.

America had to ask her criminologists, too, because she was, furthermore, becoming very alarmed by the rise in crime. Her growing fear of crime exacerbated her fear of Blacks, and in effect became almost synonymous with it. It could become synonymous because, as

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Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, points out, America nurtures the myth that crime is the "exclusive province of the disadvantaged," and neglects the crimes committed not in the ghetto but in the "marble halls of major brokerage firms, banks, and corporate headquarters."

Violations of antitrust, fair trade, product safety, and consumer protection laws as well as the laws of the regulatory agencies are most costly to America. The lawlessness perpetrated by corporations and businessmen amasses fortunes in the hands of a few people while defrauding the public. Yet, although she suffers more from it, white America feels less threatened by this type of crime, this practice of institutionalized violence. She reacts with greater alarm to the boy on the street with a brick in his hand.

Americans' attitude toward violence has been conditioned by their folklore—the glorious and bloody days when the West was wild and men were men. The gun battles of the frontier seem to constitute our chief cultural heritage, as we see them endlessly reenacted in movies and television, and transposed to other settings—gangsterland, battlefield, or boxing ring. They mold America's concept of what violence is.

Violence is a fist in the mouth, the bark of a rifle, a settlement in flames. It is abrupt, it is physical, it is a visible act. In consequence, inflicting immediate, visible damage to persons or to property seems much more violent to the American mind than causing injury in a slower, less dramatic fashion. Burning a liquor store is violence. The slow starvation of a child is not. Rocks thrown and molotov cocktails are violence. Rats

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in the tenement baby's crib are not. The denial of a living wage is not. The peddling of dope to ghetto youth is not. The raping done by a youth under the influence of dope is.

This selective way of perceiving and labeling violence explains why America can live alongside organized crime with so little outrage. As long as the hoods don't start gun-battles in the streets they are not considered violent. Violence that is institutionalized, be it in the Mafia or in police stations, in corporate practices or in dehumanizing laws, violence that does not disturb business-as-usual, is in a different category. It can be tolerated.

The cowboy-and-Indian type of violence not only shapes America's definition of brutality, perhaps it also gives her a taste for it. It has been argued in a host of studies that the violence portrayed in movies and on television aggravates the viewer's own tendencies to violence. If this is true, it might explain the degree of alarm Americans feel when violence breaks out of its socially accepted limits. As the rocks fly and the adrenalin pumps into their bloodstream, they would be frightened not merely by the possibility of suffering injury, but also by their own desires and by what mayhem might occur should these urges ever get out of control.

In any event, when the perpetrators of physical violence are black, the fright aroused in whites is particularly strong. Some psychologists have suggested that it springs from an age-old fear of retaliation. You dread the person you have wronged, you resent him for the suffering you have caused him.

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Whether white America consciously feels guilty about it or not, she knows deep down that blood is on her hands. A fear whispers there that some day, somehow, she will have to pay; that the day of retribution will come. That black shadow she has wronged, that dark presence hovering near, may rise up—and in an unimaginable nightmare wreak his vengeance. Throughout our history white repression of rebellious Blacks has been of such unwarranted savagery that it is comprehensible only in terms of this fear of retaliation. This dread has given rise to the mythological figure of the “bad nigger,” a projection of the white’s own fears.

I will leave it to the psychologists to explore the roots of white fear, but it certainly plays a role in America’s response to black protest. It has led America not only to exaggerate the intensity of black violence, but to see violence where none exists. On a Southern road on a peaceful march, among a band of powerless men, the cry of black power is raised—and America gasps in fear. Is the day of reckoning upon her? Blocking a construction site, lines of jobless men picket and shout—and America’s flesh creeps. Is Armageddon near? Her fear deludes her into seeing violence where there is only defiance, violence where there is only peaceful confrontation. It does not allow her to see that black men are now just talking and acting the way white men have always behaved. For when Blacks get “uppity” and demanding, she tends to see not human beings, vulnerable and angry, but the bogeymen of her fantasies, threatening the ultimate justice she dreads.

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The irrationality of these fears is reflected in two Harris polls. The Kerner Commission, after examining the causes of the riots, could not have stated more unequivocally its conclusions that the riots were not organized. Yet in a subsequent Harris poll 59 per cent of the whites refused to believe that the riots were not the result of deliberate organization. All evidence to the contrary, they still beheld the specter of conspiracy. "Hostile forces are at hand.... They're out to get us...."

In March of 1970 another Harris survey sought to measure white fear of racial violence. The percentage of whites uneasy about racial violence had risen from 43 to 52 per cent over the previous four years. When fear of violence was cross-analyzed with the degree of contact with Blacks, also measured in the poll, it became immediately apparent that the whites with the most fear were those with the least contact.

Getting Uptight

It is not personal experiences that build these fears so much as attitudes—attitudes that have been aggravated by the communications media and by the frustrations bred by an unwinnable Asian war.

If it is hard for white America to see the racial struggle with clear and dispassionate eyes, the news media have not made it easier. By focusing on the flamboyant and the violent, press, radio, and television coverage of racial issues and incidents has performed a disservice to Blacks and whites alike. It has, all too often, misrepresented the struggling efforts of the one and inflamed the fears of the other.

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One evening soon after the 1968 riots in Washington I was dining with a group of white newsmen. One of them, an NBC correspondent, said, "Sterling, you moderates have deserted us."

"I don't care for the label of moderate," I answered. "I like to think of myself as a responsible militant. But the fact of the matter is that we haven't deserted the whites, you of the media have deserted us. I could be talking all night about rational nonviolent methods of resolving our problems, but if there were a revolutionary next door you would all be over there. And what *he* said would go on the front page. To read your coverage it is *he* who seems to have assumed leadership while the rest of us, who want change just as deeply and who work for it, seem irrelevant."

It is, of course, in the nature of news reporting to focus more attention on the sensational than the usual, on the violent than the peaceful. And "news" is the event, not the cause, particularly if the event can be quantitatively described, be it in Vietcong body counts or in burning city blocks. "News" is the volcanic eruption rather than the slow buildup of subterranean heat. The basic human forces that are at work tend to escape our attention and our understanding.

When the white media deal with Blacks this problem of distortion is especially bad, because reports of black protest or riot are so very seldom counter-balanced by "normal" news about us. Whites get press coverage without rioting or preaching revolution. But the coverage traditionally allotted to the black community has been mainly in the crime reports—seldom in civic affairs, society, or business. Positive human interest

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stories about black people are fairly scarce because their world is simply too removed from the vast majority of newsmen. "Far too often the press acts and talks about Negroes as if Negroes do not read newspapers or watch television, give birth, marry, die or go to PTA meetings," wrote the Kerner Commission in its report. "By failing to portray the Negro as a matter of routine and in the context of the total society, the news media have, we believe, contributed to the black-white schism in this country."

Some elements in the media are trying feebly to correct this imbalance, and their task is made easier as more Blacks make their way into public life. But the situation is still one in which many Blacks feel they have, as Ellison wrote, to "strike out with your fists... curse and swear to make them recognize you." They are learning to get this recognition without rioting, finding other ways to get headlines, such as by bursting into City Council meetings with African drums and verbal invective. But the method is still shock treatment.

The media's bias toward the sensational has affected the nature of protest action itself. An escalation toward extremism has resulted; as student radicals, anti-war activists, and black demonstrators are tempted to indulge in ever wilder theatrics and rhetoric in order to capture the headlines. Thus, by the nature of their reporting and by their effect on those whom they are covering, the news media inadvertently and perhaps inevitably influence the reality they seek to communicate. Thus do white America's "eyes and ears" tend to confirm the latent fears she harbors.

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America is very uneasy, more so than at any other time in her history. She is confronted with problems of technological change, population pressure, social unrest, problems that seem almost insoluble—but the greatest of these is the futile and costly war in which she is caught. It has affected the attitudes and fears of every American. It has produced a climate of violence, anger, and frustration from which we Blacks directly suffer.

Violence escalates at home, in part, because this war is brutalizing us. We measure military success by the number of people we kill. We keep scorecards—ten Vietcong for one of us—as if we were engaged in competition for murder. We gun down civilians in free-fire zones as if we were out on a day's duck shoot. We cheapen life. And the life we cheapen is also our own. As the carnage drags on there, the violence increases at home. People rationalize that if it is all right to kill Vietnamese peasants, then it cannot be too wrong to bomb buildings here or shoot rebellious students or gun down Blacks in the street.

The war has also made us feel impotent, unsure. Unable either to extricate or exonerate ourselves, we lose confidence in our democracy, in its strength and health. Whether dove or hawk, we feel this—we are haunted by a sense of powerlessness.

The American who supports the war, and who may in past wars have fought bravely for his country and flag, feels exasperated and humiliated by our inability to push through to victory. He sees the world's most powerful nation caught in a two-bit brush-fire war, unable to win and reluctant to use its full might. It is

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a galling sight. Something, he senses, is very wrong. He vents his bitterness against all whom he sees threatening the system or challenging its strength, be they Vietcong villagers, bearded peaceniks, or black protesters. As we all are in different ways, he too is wounded by this war. Maddened, he charges at illusory obstacles. Frustrated, powerless to influence events in a far-off country, he finds a target close to home. He lumps all the protesters together, feeling that if they stopped their protest we might get the job done over there.

Black Americans find themselves special victims of our venture in Vietnam, victims three times over. They die in it, spilling out their lives in rice paddies. They are crippled at home by the inflation and recession the war produces. And, with the young, they are victims of the anger the war has bred.

Meanwhile dissent and protest, crime and violence escalate; and as they do, America, the vast "silent majority," reacts.

"Law and Order"

In voting appropriations for fiscal 1971 for the District of Columbia, Congress drastically cut back all the requests in our budget—all but one. We have had to live with the fact that, deprived of self-government, this city of almost a million must make do with the crumbs thrown it by a Congress that is neither responsible to the will of its citizens nor responsive to their needs. This is nothing new. But its assessment of our needs in this case provides a revealing example of the current national temper. Requested funds for recrea-

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tion, sanitary engineering and the Commission on Human Relations were cut almost in half; education almost by a third, and health and welfare sliced over \$17 million. The appropriations which Congress granted for the police, however, exceeded by two million dollars the amount requested by the City Council.

According to Congress we need guns and tear gas more than we need schools. We can be shortchanged on health services and rat control so that police can patrol our streets in greater numbers with more efficient weapons.

This is but one localized example of what has become a national pattern. The real needs this country must meet if she is to come to grips with the urban and racial crisis were stated by the Kerner Commission. It made crystal clear what is required—social and economic programs of unprecedented magnitude. Instead, the war on poverty is crippled, allocations for law enforcement and riot control increased.

The name of the game is "law and order." This is America's answer to her fears and her distress. This is her solution to the human dislocations that are cracking our society apart. Reformers and social scientists may continue to preach, but America cannot listen because she feels threatened—threatened by the riots, by crime, by protest and dissent.

We tend to be a people of generalizations and oversimplifications. Call the unrest of today a simple problem of "law and order" and it seems easier to deal with—more comfortable too, for it avoids the agonies of real self-appraisal and real social change. With fervor, therefore, America calls now for "law and order"—as

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if there were any sizable numbers among us who were actually opposed to the rule of law and the reign of order.

The black man, however, knows that those words are a euphemism, a code phrase meaning: "Let's put the Blacks back in their place." What the slogan meant was clear enough from the beginning when Southern governors and sheriffs first used it in the suppression of civil rights demonstrators. Ironically, it was then also the appeal of the federal government in its efforts to force the new legislation and protect the Blacks. The racial overtones of the slogan predominated, however. As former Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach pointed out:

... it was almost inevitable that "law and order" got mixed up in civil rights. It had been, after all, the plea of the white segregationists. To compound the connection, "law and order" was also the catchword of Barry Goldwater — who voted against the 1964 Act — and George Wallace — the segregationist hero — in the 1964 and 1968 Presidential campaigns. It was, too, Senators McClellan and Ervin and Thurmond — fervent segregationists and strong critics of the Court's civil rights decisions — who led the legislative battle to curb the Court on criminal procedure.

By the late 1960's the urban riots, the rising crime rates, the student revolts, the thunderous shock of assassination, broadened the appeal of the slogan. It gained respectability and came to mean more than just white backlash, but racial fear was always present in it, the fear of a black tide ready to engulf white America.

By the 1968 campaign, "law and order" had become a powerful tool in wooing middle America, one that

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no politician could afford to ignore. Some, in an effort to dilute the racist overtones, added "with justice": "Law and order with justice." But that too, by the way it was used in appealing to the voters, seemed to us a euphemism: Let's put the Blacks in their place (i.e., behind bars), but go through the courts first.

Many black leaders, seeking white support, bought that phrase. They did so in an effort to convey to the society at large the simple fact that black Americans, also, were opposed to disorder, crime, assassination, and carnage. More importantly, they sought to broaden the definition of law and order to make it applicable to the rights of the dispossessed. But middle white America was in no mood for such a sweeping view. The tag "with justice" was dropped as Congressional candidates across the country in 1970 found that the naked call to "law and order" could constitute the keystone of their campaign. As Senator Ralph Smith told his audiences during his Illinois primary campaign against Adlai Stevenson III, "Any man not willing to speak out for the necessity of preserving law and order does not deserve to hold public office."

Now we have no quarrel with "law and order" if we can take it on face value. If used in an effort to extend the rule of law in education, in housing, in employment, this call could weld us together. If it meant all the rights promised in the Constitution, then it could rally us and help us all up the long, rough road to the American promise. If the "disorder" it decries included the violence our institutions visit upon the oppressed, then that slogan would not be a travesty. But "law" now means the status quo. That word is

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used to sanctify our existing institutions and patterns of wealth, as if we had already reached some kind of utopia. And "order" is its blind defense. "Order" means that you don't question the rules of the game, though the cards are stacked against you.

No matter what the truth is, however unpleasant or however little one can do about it, it is always best to know it. Deception, particularly of oneself, does not work—for people fail to discover ways in which to cope with life when they do not face up to it. While some of us need not know all there is to know about ourselves and our circumstances, a whole society cannot indulge in self-delusion—not when basic issues are at stake, not when human life is involved.

The chief danger is that the "law and order" issue is blinding America to the real challenge to her survival. In his study of civilizations, Arnold Toynbee points out that each culture eventually reaches a point where it must adapt itself to new conditions or, lacking the capacity to change, must resign itself to collapse. He argues that when cultures fail this test, being too rigid to accept the challenge, they become paranoid. They blame their failures on the activities of outside forces or on the machinations of internal elements. Finding a scapegoat, they expend all their available power trying to crush it, rather than making the changes necessary to their survival.

So here we are—at a time in history when America must open herself to new ways of sharing, when she must venture onto new paths, when she must do this or die. Every serious and sensitive observer has recognized this imperative; the 1960's made it clear. America

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cannot survive as a democratic society unless she sheds those obsolete patterns that deprive vast portions of her population from their rightful share of her life and wealth. It will take courage, for change can be frightening and men are greedy and timid, fearful of the unknown, clinging to the old. And now, just when this unparalleled challenge is upon America, comes the call to "law and order." Just when she should be opening her hand, it tells her to close her fist. When she should be unlatching the door, it shouts at her to double the lock and pile up the sandbags. It screams at her to stiffen her defenses, tighten her ranks. Just when she desperately needs to draw on all her latent resources of faith and courage and trust, it dips into the brackish wells of fear.

"Law and order" tells America that dissent is dangerous and that protest weakens. So she cannot listen when dislocations in her society become manifest through public outcry. It was not always so.

When Dr. King led his followers in the methods of Gandhi, the nation, as a whole, admired his courage and vision and his faith in our democracy. The moral witness of his passive resistance movement shook America's soul awake. The sit-ins that filled the Southern jails in the early 60's fired her belief in herself and her belief in change. But before the close of the decade, so august and respectable a body as Dr. Milton Eisenhower's Commission on the Causes of Violence condemned civil disobedience. They condemned it even when nonviolent. Clearly expressing the altered mood of the country, most of the Commission members said that it produced "an erosion of the law, conducive to

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anarchy and dangerous to the future of the country."

Along with the rest of middle America they forgot, or chose to ignore, the fact that civil disobedience is deep-rooted in the national tradition, beginning with the Boston Tea Party. I suppose that they would find many utterances of Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and Henry Thoreau inflammatory and subversive now, a threat to "law and order." In their blanket condemnation of civil disobedience they also apparently forgot that the laws which Dr. King defied were in themselves unconstitutional, that his movement worked in tandem with the federal judiciary and that his goal was to broaden the rule of law. Such distinctions become obliterated when a national mood of fear prevails and when we lose the balance between order and justice.

One wonders what they are to do now and where they are to seek support, those who would follow the example of Dr. King. They are already under attack by black radicals for being so accommodating as to refuse to resort to violence. Now they find themselves being condemned by the other side for challenging the law at all. In this squeeze play more and more of them are finding credibility in the radicals' claim that the system cannot be changed through peaceful methods.

By Any Means Necessary

After the riots in Washington, D.C., that followed Dr. King's assassination, I was talking with a group of businessmen. They were enraged because the rioters had broken into some of their stores and looted. They angrily criticized the mayor for not having called in

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the National Guard right away, and the safety director for not having the police arrest all looters. I said to them, "Frankly, the only way the police could have controlled the looting was to have shot the people down." At that point some voices shouted, "Yes! Yes, that's what should have been done!"

It is precisely this attitude, the willingness to say "law and order by any means," that is the greatest danger facing us. The instance I describe is hardly isolated. Across the nation citizens have asked that the police be "unleashed" to deal with demonstrators and rioters as they see fit. A poll quoted by the National Commission on the Causes of Violence indicated that "at least two-thirds of white Americans believe that black firebombers and looters should simply be shot down in the streets." As police conduct in quelling disturbances would indicate, the public is increasingly ready to condone the use of suppressive force. America is saying, "First things first. We'll get around to justice and equality later." First things first, as if orderliness and decorum were more basic to a society than the faith and acceptance of its citizenry.

As we seek new strategies for black America, we must face the fact that large segments of the society are ready to employ "any means necessary" in the defense of law and order. We can note some of the methods increasingly used — police infiltration and provocation, and punitive arrests and detention, to say nothing of "justifiable homicide." The American Civil Liberties Union in a report released in December of 1969 documented the tactics employed against the Black Panthers. It revealed to the American public how police

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are used as spies and even provocateurs. Infiltrating Panther groups, cops in disguise attempted to induce members to commit burglaries and in some cases even provided them with weapons, maps of prospective targets, and getaway cars. Repeated arrests and raids on charges of harboring and distributing political literature were a common practice. Such actions, concluded the ACLU, "amounted to a provocative and even punitive harassment, defying the constitutional rights of Panthers to make political speeches or distribute political literature."

These tactics came to light because of the manner in which police killed two Chicago Panther leaders. Even though the Panthers as an organization were feared by many, some people began to wonder if they should not fear the police more. Such established figures as Arthur Goldberg, Whitney Young, and Roy Wilkins called for an independent investigation. But most of the white American public was not concerned.

The same public also accepted without outcry the acquittal of the police killers in the 1967 Algiers Motel massacre in Detroit.* In the courtroom, witnesses told of the police search for reported snipers at the Algiers Motel, of the abuse and beatings they meted out, of the sadistic drama that ended in the death of three black teenagers. Thirty-nine witnesses were called, the testimony against the police piled up—and at the end the all-white jury acquitted the four defendants. Jubilant, the officers announced they would seek to be reinstated in the police force. Already it seems half-

*The event is described in some detail in my book *Black Reflections on White Power* (Eerdmans, 1969).

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forgotten and life will go on the same for America — but not quite the same, for justice has been sacrificed for “law and order,” and by paying such a price we are all irreparably damaged.

When in another recent trial the jury acquitted three Chicago policemen charged with beating up a reporter at the Democratic National Convention, the president of the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police exulted: “It proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that the lady of justice is not blindfolded and that anarchy will not prevail in our society.” He was forgetting, along with many others, just how important, how sacred even, the blindfold is. That blindfold symbolizes human society’s enlightened and hard-won dedication to equality before the law. Rip it off and none of us in the long run is safe.

America’s readiness to use any means necessary to protect “law and order” is seen not only in separate, isolated instances, but in sweeping changes that can affect the lives of all of us. These changes—in the surveillance of citizens, in the treatment of suspects, and in the powers accorded the police and the courts—are considered by many civil-libertarians to be violations of our Constitutional rights. In any event, they have a bearing on the actions of those of us who are fighting for social change. New dangers, new risks arise. We need to know them if we are to reach our goal. If America is stockpiling dynamite we must watch where we play with matches. If she is laying minefields, we must chart the course of our strategies carefully, measuring the chances of each path we plot.

We need, for one thing, to know that we are watched.

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Dissent is now considered dangerous, dissenters are trouble-makers. Information on them must be compiled in data banks and dossiers. Protest leaders, whether they are organizing a violent Weathermen's display or a peaceful anti-war moratorium or a rally for black solidarity, are watched and reported on. This is disturbing; and disturbing also is the range of the forces utilized for this purpose. The FBI is apparently not considered adequate to handle this task. The Central Intelligence Agency and Army intelligence units are employed, although their use for domestic surveillance is illegal. One wonders whether America is more endangered by protesters and "revolutionaries" than by this panicked misuse of her institutions.

In 1966 a provision was proposed in Congress that would make it a federal crime to move across state lines to incite a riot. At that time it was successfully opposed by the Administration on the grounds that it would inhibit free speech. The Attorney General pointed out that such a law would have placed a heavy burden on a leader like Dr. King in his March on Washington. In an emotional setting like this, the words of such a leader can easily be provocative. Still it is essential that he feel free to say what he believes is true.

This anti-riot measure, defeated then in committee, was resurrected and made law less than two years later. Again racial fears swung the balance for "law and order." After the rioting that followed Dr. King's assassination, it was tagged on as a rider to the Civil Rights Act of 1968, put in by Southern congressmen and supported by men from the North determined to

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"get the outside agitators" they held responsible for racial unrest.

It is important that we Blacks recognize the dangers of the "law and order" syndrome and that we fight it. It is even more important that we do not make it worse. For our own freedom and survival we must try to allay white fears, not whip them up. We need the law, we need the blindfolded impartiality of that lady of justice. It is easy for men to forget how fragile a thing is the operation of law. Fragile also is the respect of a people for it. For all its trappings of power, it remains a social contract—its basis is trust. If white America is confused, at least let us not be.

I am weary of the demagoguery of the radicals who scream that we are becoming a police state. America is not a police state: we still can speak out, we still can act, we still can organize and negotiate. But America is sick. This illness, this paranoia, is not incurable, but it is dangerous. It limits our options. It makes the path more difficult for us. But the imperative to act for our own survival is all the greater.

4

The Dangers and Uses of Separatism

Lost Battleplan

As we take our bearings, this then is the landscape we see stretching around us. It is bleak enough. We see a land chilled by distrust, cracked by violence, polarizing between fear and rage.

Across this inhospitable terrain our forces are scattered and disorganized. The movement that had inspired us and led us forth is now dissipated. Some of the warriors, weary and disillusioned, have given up, retreating to private life and private reward; others quarrel among themselves; on the battlefield the movement is that of troops in disarray. Here a group calls for retreat, telling its troops to renounce the field entirely and withdraw to terrain which the enemy does not want and will not challenge. There a group masses for a charge with loud war-whoops; and as it stampedes out into the clear, enemy artillery mows it down. Here and there across the scene smoke rises from little brush-fire engagements and isolated shoot-outs. Mean-

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while, the enemy, whom we had in the past been able to push, prod, and woo to the negotiating table, becomes alarmed by the smoke and the din. They retrench, dig in more securely, and roll out the heavy cannons.

Now to wage war as if it were a game or a shouting match, to fight it without clear strategy and clear goals, is a luxury we cannot afford. We are in danger of waking up tomorrow and finding that we have been outwitted—the shouting over, our weapons gone, and a wall around us. We have glimpsed, in the preceding chapter, where America's panic for "law and order" threatens to lead her. Just as the white man must awaken to the dangerous course he is on, so must the Black understand the perils of law-and-order-by-any-means. Those dangers are so real that as we begin to sense them we cease our yelling and ranting. We see that we must stop playing games. We perceive that our Constitutional rights are threatened, that some of our privacy and protection are lost, that the ground we have been walking on is no longer quite as solid as before. We see that now we must proceed with the dead-earnest, calculating calm of climbers picking their way across a steep mountainside that threatens avalanche.

It is fear, of course, that will loose the avalanche. The growth of fear is viewed by some as a measure of progress toward revolution. They claim that fear is a legitimate weapon in the arsenal of change; and in some isolated cases it undoubtedly is. But when fear prevails as a climate, as the mood of the majority, it obstructs change. For fear does not accept constructive

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challenge, it engages in self-defense, it seeks only to protect itself. It does not open doors, it shuts them.

Simply to put the fear of the devil in the heart of the white man will not win us any allies, nor will it rally behind us a united black community; for Blacks who are part of society will fear just as whites do the forces of violence that threaten to destroy it.

Today, however, many young radicals see the growth of fear as a kind of victory or tribute; to scare America gives them a heady sense of self-importance. To them I would like to say that while it may furnish them some kicks to see America cringe in fright and while it may tickle their pride, if we are at all serious about what we want and where we are going, there is no constructive use whatsoever to be made of white fear. It has grown too large and too inflamed for us to excite it further and gain anything but our own defeat. Blacks are far outnumbered in this country; they are not ready to die; and, as I have shown, they do not constitute a revolutionary mass. When the rule of law is in rubble we will not have been vindicated, but doubly victimized; we will have lost our last weapon.

I would say to them further, the country is sick. She is ridden with a neurotic degree of fear and prejudice, projecting her own violence on those whom she oppresses. All the more reason to move with stealth and cunning. To aggravate the disease is not the answer. Around a sick patient one moves with circumspection—and does what is necessary.

If the system were totally closed to us, we could let it die, this limping experiment in democracy; we could then prefer chaos to suffocation. But it is not

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closed: there are still lovers for us to put our hands on, still allies for us to enlist before it is too late. In order to maintain itself the system has had to permit a measure of flexibility, of upward mobility. It has not kept its heel so squarely on our necks that we must lose all faith in its ability to redeem itself. Enough breathing room has been left so that if the breath is properly taken something can still happen.

Until we have seriously tried that, until we have, so to speak, called democracy's bluff, we cannot give up on it. Not because to do so would be faithless, but because it would be stupid. To seek to destroy the system is not a sane option for us. What we would overwhelmingly unleash would be not "revolution" but massive right-wing repression.

The Lures of Separatism

Because America is sick we must, as we have seen, watch out for the pitfalls of futile rhetoric and inflammatory gesture. There is another pitfall to which we must be alert as we seek for effective strategies. We must guard against the lures of black separatism, for that too is a one-way street.

It comes in many guises, from racial solidarity to cultural nationalism to pragmatic schemes for accommodation to white power; for there are still those who appear to think that black America can achieve her place in the sun by going a separate way. As I shall seek to show, separatist tactics can be useful, but when separatism becomes an end in itself, that is precisely what it does become—a dead end, an end to our hopes and demands for true freedom and equality.

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We need to clarify this for ourselves because the attraction of separatism is potent. It is potent to us because we have tasted the heady wine of pride in our own blackness, and because we are weary, weary almost to death, of struggling our way in a white man's world. But we must not let our emotions, our pride, our fatigue determine for us our strategies. We must strive to see clearly where separatism as a tactic can be useful to us, and where, as a goal, it betrays our future in America.

Many and varied are the voices that tell us to walk a separate path. "Don't vote," was the counsel of some in the Presidential campaign of 1968. "Neither party represents our choice, so hold aloof from the political scene, stay away from the ballot box. Both parties have betrayed us, so honor neither with your vote."

"Don't let yourself be counted," said some at the time of the 1970 census. "Do not cooperate, do not answer questions. America will misuse this information to extend her control over us, to further her evil intentions; we will confound her by opting out."

Black studies, black-degree programs, black dormitories become major issues on campus after campus, as black students expend their energies and their organizational skills campaigning for separateness in their courses and in their living arrangements.

"Don't join in; don't work with whitey," is the frequent call when a massive popular action such as the Vietnam Moratorium is planned. Black spokesmen tell their people not to participate. "If we join in, we'll be used, betrayed. We must do our own thing, walk our separate path."

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Now it is true that we have needed to sense our separateness in order to survive the humiliations and degradations visited upon us. We have needed it for our strength and our dignity. The pride which sprang up in 1966 with the black power cry and which was indeed its motive power, was, as we have seen, deeply wholesome to the black spirit. It was a psychological necessity. Call it "black nationalism" or "black culturalism" or what you will, it broke through the vicious circle which prejudice generates: the downward spiral where contempt and self-contempt, discrimination and despair reinforce each other. A tonic to our soul, it released the energies of self-confidence and self-affirmation. This was a moment of separatism, a kind of separatism, that we sorely needed.

It was good, furthermore, because it unmasked the myths and illusions of token integration. We were not only learning that integration was failing to work, honored only by pious words and a dribble of tokenism. We were learning also that it was not and could not be a goal in itself. It is, in the last analysis, only a numbers game: a handful of Blacks to this institution or that, to schools, unions, businesses, seasoning the white world with an admixture of black faces. It was a game that taunted and deluded us as long as control was held exclusively in white hands. One could still argue, as I did, that integration was ultimately both desirable and necessary, but it was no longer seen as an end in itself. It was important to clarify our objectives, both for ourselves and for white men; as we did so, the separateness we felt was cleansing, healthy.

Now black separatism is not new. It is a current

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that has run through our entire history, as present as has been our despair of achieving dignity and equality in this land. The current surfaced in the popular support that rallied to Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammed, and Malcolm X. At such times the black man's weariness with white America took the form of a powerful homesickness for a place where he could be a man. Treated as an outsider, he felt himself in exile. He felt he was in Babylôn, though he knew no other land but this.

Yet always stronger than this current was his knowledge, bitter but realistic, that here in this land was his world—his roots and his future. In the long run no one could tell him that he belonged anywhere else. His dreams of nationhood, he had to admit in his heart, were founded on no greater reality than the reality of his despair. Again and again he came back to the realization that he lacked the basis not only for political separatism, but racial and cultural separatism as well. His language, religion, social institutions, cultural patterns, and political ideals were those of the New World. While the separatism that came to the fore in the mid and late 60's was, as I pointed out, a wholesome and satisfying thing, it could only be a way-station, not a goal.

Many of us, however, seem to have become mesmerized by this proud new vision of ourselves. Many of us have allowed ourselves to become arrested at this point, enthralled by our sense of difference and our psychological need to proclaim it. We have become so busy being black that we forget what we are after.

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We forget that it is not blackness we want, but the freedom of the free man.

Just as integration is not a goal in itself, neither is separatism: both can come packaged in poverty and powerlessness. Forgetting that, we get sidetracked on issues that will not alter the status quo, expending our energies on symbolic struggles that will not bring jobs or skills, housing or schools or votes, but will only enhance our own sense of distinctiveness. As long as we preoccupy ourselves with assertions of our uniqueness, the ghettos that wall us in will stand.

Cultural diversity is in itself no challenge to political power, as Joseph Stalin knew so well. Stalin recognized that indeed it could be a useful mechanism in subverting rebellious tendencies. So he allowed and encouraged those in subjugation to focus on their cultural distinctions: let the Ukrainians and the Azerbaijanis and the Georgians sing their songs, perform their dances, and parade in costume. It is a harmless safety valve; it will give to the powerless the illusion of selfhood and nationhood and divert their energies from any possible threat to the political tyranny of the Kremlin.

In such a way can the current fashionable focus on black identity serve white racism. No Stalin is telling us to do this, we are doing it of our own accord. Many young Blacks in high schools and universities, for example, who should be gearing up for the real fight, the attack on the system, spend their time agitating for such objectives as black studies and black dormitories. In and of themselves these have no strategic purpose; black studies for the sake of black studies,

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black dormitories for the sake of black dormitories, serve no function unless they are, as they seldom are, specifically geared to programs for change.

A student from Cornell pointed out this need when he said recently, "They [the white administration and faculty] will simply let us study black history and wear daishikis while we get ready to work for Xerox or IBM.... Going through an intellectual environment is not enough; black studies has got to be an action-oriented program."

Donning a daishiki and growing a bush is fine if it energizes the wearer for real action; but "black-is-beautiful" is dangerous if it amounts only to wrapping oneself up in one's own glory and magnificence.

I am reminded, a little sadly, of Narcissus, that handsome youth of Greek mythology. He was immobilized, you will remember, by the vision he caught of himself in the reflection of a pond. Startled and entranced by his own beauty, he leaned there over the water and fell in love with his own reflection. And I wonder, putting that old myth into an altered scenario, what would have happened if he had been pursuing a real live girl that he prized and wanted. Running after her he pauses as he glimpses his reflection in the water; stopping there he gazes in rapt contemplation: "How beautiful I am," he repeats over and over. And by the time he rouses himself from his self-admiration the object of his pursuit, the real live girl, the one he wanted, is gone. The landscape is empty.

I hope that the black youth of today who are pausing in the midst of life to look at themselves, will not look too long, as Narcissus did. I hope they will look

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just long enough to know that their beauty is true, just long enough to gain confidence and an understanding of themselves. Otherwise they will lose the momentum that has been gained, they will lose precious time in this period of accelerating change, and will awaken from their reverie with the prize out of sight, their hands empty, the old walls still there.

Separatism is attractive not only because of the cultural pride and identity in which it is often clothed. It is appealing too because of our fatigue.

Our weariness is real. We are weary of the long, lonely struggle of trying to make it against the odds, of trying to shove, cajole, wheedle, persuade, and threaten our way in where we are not welcome. Day after day in numberless ways society tells us that we cannot come in, that we cannot be like everybody else. We can get handouts sometimes, and sometimes privileges and quotas, but the freedom to forget ourselves, to forget our color—almost never. We know that disappointments are in store, but knowing is not enough, for the skin never seems thick enough nor the mind inured enough to keep the wounds from hurting or the burden from weighing us down.

It is hard to live with this pressure; so what do we do? Some of us give up inside, armoring ourselves in a protective cocoon of passivity, muffling the thrust of life within us. This is one solution: survival through apathy. Others of us find a way of slipping outside, of sidestepping the pressure by living beyond the laws of society. This solution is probably less damaging psychologically: for a brief time, while you are flouting

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society and until you get caught, you have the illusion of freedom.

For those of us who are so constituted that we cannot opt for either the slow death of apathy or the short life of lawlessness, the struggle is one of weariness. We have to fight our own fatigue as much as the white man's intransigence. It is like making a long trek with a blister on your heel. Each step hurts. You want to reach your goal, but you have a terrible temptation simply to sit down and give up. The long-run objectives of "equality" and "freedom" and an "ultimately integrated society" seem mirages at the end of the road. You want to close your eyes and nurse your feet and stop thinking about them.

Even white men must sense something of what this is like. While with the Washington Urban League, I was once entertained at lunch by an executive of Firestone, in my hometown of Akron, Ohio. Years back I had worked there as an office boy; now they were apparently thinking that it was time to hire a black executive and what could be better or more politic than to choose a good home-grown boy. My host talked to me about coming with the company, outlining the attractions they had to offer; then referring to my years of work in the movement he said, "Sterling, don't you get tired of that struggle?" He did not comment on the cause of the weariness, on the resistance of white racism, but he did say, "Isn't it exhausting? Push, push all the time." And unspoken were the words, "So why don't you give up for a while?" No perspective on black separatism is complete unless we acknowledge that some of its attraction for Blacks springs from

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this very urge: to give up, to turn our backs on white America and the galling struggle we must daily face.

While the strength of separatism springs from the fact that it answers this need for escape, therein also, of course, lies its weakness. For escape is not a strategy for change. Our ancestors could live in a fairly self-enclosed black world, drawing comfort from each other, ministering to each other. They could do this, they could seek refuge with honor, because that is all they were allowed; that is the way society was organized and they had no other choice. But those who today want to run back to the warm black womb do have a choice, and they are choosing the easy way out.

They do it, of course, in the name of pride and power and with talk of identity and unity, but all too often it is essentially a retreat. They have found that life is not whole in the outside world, not complete, not the way it should be, and they retreat from it. We have a term for that today: "copping out." I am not opposed to separatism per se. What I oppose is the organization of people into an immobility and isolation that will permit the enemy to regroup.

There is such a thing as tactical retreat, for purposes of consolidation or planning or shifting of attack. Fine. But retreat for purposes of comfort or self-adulation cannot serve. We will not emerge stronger—just more self-adulatory. And as we emerge expecting to find the enemy gone or waiting politely, we will find that he is closer upon us and that the ground we had gained has been lost.

As individuals, people will seek respite periodically; and in an organized movement it is usually possible for

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them to drop out, to escape for a while, to rest and come back again. The real danger arises when you have leadership itself moving toward separatism as a resting place, a hiding place. Then escape is legitimized, the movement gone, the battlefield turned over to the enemy.

Withdrawal from engagement has become so plausible an attitude that, as we have seen, voices can call seriously for boycotting the ballot box or dodging the census. In actuality this amounts to nothing more than organizing yourself out of society, out of any meaningful involvement or participation. Pathetically and irrationally we think that by not voting we can punish society for punishing us. "We will hold aloof," we say as we nurse our wounds. And in such a way does death creep up on us. "Neither candidate or neither party is true to us, therefore we will not vote." And in so doing we give up the leverage that we have for change; we throw down legitimate tools that can be employed for our own goals.

Similarly in refusing to be counted we lose the power of numbers and the leverage they can give us in electoral apportionment and social programs. By refusing to be identified, we lose the power that identification can furnish us. The white establishment would prefer to think that there are only twenty million of us instead of thirty. We can either show them that we count or we can persist, as some of us do, in thinking that the best way to be seen is to hide, the best way to be discovered is to be missed.

Such strategies are doomed to failure, for American society is not going to seek us out; it will offer us no

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free gifts. It has been forgetting us all along, hiding us behind the railroad tracks and the bridges and the free-ways, letting us rot in the neglected core of its cities. It will be happy to continue to forget us, if we let it, and it would like statistics to show that there is no problem. It is in our interest and for our survival that we must keep the problem visible, blatant, spread across the record books.

Blinded by Color

It was perhaps inevitable that, in those assertions of pride, identity, and independence that black power represented, we should shun our white co-workers for a while. It was probably to be expected that we turn from our efforts to communicate with white America, from the tedious attempts to persuade. Such a phase is not unnatural in relationships undergoing change, and if such relationships are healthy they can survive it. In fact, I believe that the dialogue between black and white America is a bit more honest now because we were able to unmask our anger and speak our bitterness, because we had the self-respect to turn our face away. But while this has been a useful phase or, when deliberate, a useful tactic, it cannot be a long-term strategy.

After the tragic incidents of police shootings in the summer of 1968 here in Washington we succeeded in calling public hearings on police conduct. The purpose was to air the complaints of the black community, to examine and publicize its grievances so that some checks on the police could be instituted and so that possibly in the long run there could be some measure of civilian

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control. Bitterness against the police was at fever pitch. The community needed not simply to vent this bitterness, but to win public support for the achievement of change.

It was in the course of the first hearing, as I sat at the front of the hall with other members of the Black United Front, that I gradually became aware that white members of the public who had come to attend were being approached and asked to leave. Shielding my eyes against the glare of the television lights, I recognized what was going on and who was doing it. I went over to Stokely Carmichael, who was sitting on the platform with me. "Tell your men to stop that," I said. "We need the whites here because they are involved. They need to know what we are going to be saying here." I told him that if whites were excluded from these hearings I would withdraw. The whites present were permitted to stay, but for that night only. In subsequent hearings Carmichael's men succeeded in getting the white public excluded, and my own participation in the hearings ceased.

I cite this as an example of the absurdity to which separatist tactics and posturing can go. In that effort to expose and examine police misconduct it was precisely the white public who needed to be present. It was they who had found it hard to believe that the police can do wrong, they who needed to know, they whose support was important if programs of reform and control were to be established. They were there, ready for once to listen. And in stupid arrogance we turned them out. Perhaps we feel sometimes the need

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to do to white men what they have done to us, but it was a blind act and self-defeating.

Eldridge Cleaver has had some pointed comments to make about this preoccupation with color. Some months after these hearings Carmichael went on to the Black Panthers; when he resigned from that organization over a year later Cleaver wrote an open letter to him from Algiers. In it he said:

... We thought that, in time, even you would be able to shake the SNCC paranoia about white control and get on with the business. ...

It has always seemed to me that you belittle the intelligence of your black brothers and sisters when you constantly warn them that they had better beware of white folks. After all, you are not the only black person out of Babylon who has been victimized by white racism. But you sound as though you are scared of white people, as though you are still running away from slave-catchers who will lay hands on your body and dump you in a bag.

... You had great dreams, Stokely, and your visions, on the top side, were heroic. On the bottom side, when it came to the details of reality, your vision was blind. You were unable to distinguish your friends from your enemies because all you could see was the color of the cat's skin.

I suppose that, after having been treated for so long as though our pigmentation were the most important, all-determining, and only visible thing about us, it is not unnatural that we should now fall prey to the same kind of limited vision. The white man was blind to our every aspect except the color of our skin. So now, even Steven, we will judge by color too. Our deep angers and frustrations we will vent in blanket

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terms: all whites are equally at fault, none to be trusted, each at heart a racist. As Carmichael has said, "The enemy is the honky." Not institutions or economic systems, not custom or tradition, but the men themselves. This gets you in the same box as confusing the sin and the sinner. It is, I admit, more emotionally satisfying to strike out at flesh and blood, to vent your hate on human beings rather than their practices, but it is not very realistic and it is not very effective.

Separatists and nationalists, who say that you can neither trust nor deal with anyone who is white, tend to think of themselves as more revolutionary than those of us who work on an interracial basis. They talk as if their uncompromising stand on color is proof of a deeper commitment to social change. This is misleading and often dishonest. Judging by what they accomplish, their posturing and rhetoric represents more of a resignation to the status quo than a challenge to it. Though they cry for black power, they refuse to fight through to where the power is, and brand as traitors those who do. They prefer to sulk in their room and shout through the closed door, than open the door, walk out, and broaden their powers through confrontation, dialogue, and negotiation.

We have seen earlier in this book that violent revolution is not a practical option, but a gesture of hopelessness. Similarly, separatism as an overall strategy is a dead end. You do not affect the course of the ship, at least in the direction you want to, by haranguing your mates in the hold or by dueling on the decks. Nor do you affect it by threatening to go off in your own lifeboat. You do it by learning the controls, making

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it to the bridge, and putting your hand to the wheel. That is why, despite their aura and reputation, the nationalists are no real threat to the status quo. And that is why long-term exclusivist separatism is not a viable strategy for Blacks.

Tactical Separatism: Building Ghetto Power

We have had enough experience with segregation by now, whether overt or disguised, to know that separate means unequal. Over half a century of legalized separatism in education provides adequate testimony to the fact that when Blacks are compartmentalized they are misrepresented, mistreated, misserved, and cheated of their due. We knew then and we still know now that the true equality we want for our children can only come in a single and integrated society.

True enough. But that is not the whole story and that is not our whole job. While the ultimate solution to the problem is in integration, we recognize that, except in white rhetoric or theory, we are a long, long way from that goal. Our struggles toward integration have built a larger middle class and have produced some peer relationships, but millions of Blacks are untouched by it. They are still at the bottom of the ladder, walled into the ghetto, in schools that are black and in housing and jobs, when they have them, that are segregated. That is a fact of life.

We must not let our fight for integration blind us to the separateness that exists, nor to the fact that some of the immediate improvements so urgently needed, in schooling, jobs, housing, must be achieved within the framework of this separateness. While designing all

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the strategies for integration that we can, we must work just as hard with our brother who is buried in the bowels of the ghetto. We must work with people where they are.

We sometimes succumb to the habit of our white friends who measure progress simply by the degree of integration achieved. They tote up the numbers of Blacks admitted or bodies shifted, they compute the "racial balance." Noses are counted and statistics cited to show how much "progress" has been made, forgetting in the process that this touches only a minority of Blacks. Any true measure of change must also reflect the realities in that world which is separate and solely black.

Since black America lives to so large an extent in a separate world, we must deal with that world and strive to re-create it on its own terms. In so doing, we will not only recognize de facto separatism but use it as an agent of change. We will address our strategies to it, whether in upgrading the quality of black schools or in building political power through block voting, or economic power through black business and black labor unions. We will use the separateness white America has forced upon us. We will use it as a tactical tool, to forge pressure groups and the unity and discipline that is necessary to make them effective. Always, however, we must do so pragmatically, out of interim necessity rather than ideology. We must never let such efforts dupe us into believing that we can build a separate society or settle for less than a full and free sharing in American life.

The crisis facing us in education is a case in point.

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Here conflict rages over the legal ambiguities of desegregation; it could immobilize us if we let it. Here also we can see how limited is our effectiveness if the only battles we fight are on the integration front. We cheat our children and our future if all our efforts are focused on mixing. For no matter what we manage to achieve in housing and education in the next twenty years, there will still be neighborhoods that are predominantly black and there will still be schools that are predominantly black. If we concentrate only on the politics of racial balance we will neglect those schools. And a generation will be lost.

Most black children today are cruelly mistreated by the public school system. While debate continues over the politics and legalities of desegregation, they are cooped in derelict buildings and crowded classrooms with overworked staff and inadequate, obsolete equipment. No longer victimized by law, by a dual school system, they are victimized now by geography, by the poverty of their neighborhoods. These are the golden doors to equal education that the Supreme Court opened to them in 1954. If this is "integration," it is not working.

Though our school districts are legally one now, their practices and their allotment of resources are not. This inequality was dramatized here in Washington, D.C., in a citizens' suit against the school board. The evidence presented by the plaintiffs showed that the average per-pupil expenditure for fiscal 1968 was highest in the higher-income, white areas of the city. The school with the largest per-pupil expenditure spent over two and a half times as much per student as

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the school with the lowest, while the entire, predominantly white neighborhood west of Rock Creek Park spent an average of \$103 more per pupil than the low-income black neighborhood east of the Anacostia River.

In a setting that seems purposefully designed to discourage the child, it requires of him almost superhuman determination to acquire the tools of learning. To the few who can muster such determination, school can be a doorway of sorts to the future, but to many it is their introduction to defeat and alienation, their initiation into self-contempt. This, of course, is mirrored in their performance, where, as shown in many district-wide reading tests, the ghetto schools score clearly lower.

Bussing the children to more advantaged white schools is only a partial remedy. It is good because mixing in itself is good, because Americans cannot acquire a full and true education in isolated pockets, be these pockets black or white. But the use of the school bus cannot be the whole solution to our problems of de facto segregation. In the first place, the segregation it attacks has far deeper causes, more tenacious roots, than the bussing of schoolchildren has the power to affect. Shifting bodies to other classrooms can give the appearance of desegregation, but it does not counterbalance the deeply imbedded social and economic patterns that isolate the Blacks in terms of where they can live and where they can work. We must make sure that white America does not mistake this appearance of desegregation for the realities of integration, nor that she uses bussing as a salve to her conscience and an opportunity to neglect the millions of children

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still caught in the brutal hopelessness of slum schools.

The second reason why bussing is not the full solution to de facto segregation relates to the disadvantages black children carry with them to school. Before they ever climb aboard the bus, they are scarred by society. Victims of the disruptive forces of ghetto life, deprived of pre-school training, and handicapped by inadequate elementary schooling, they enter the interracial situation at an appalling disadvantage. They are expected to compete, but society has already placed invisible shackles on their bodies and minds. We must not, of course, let these inequities inhibit our efforts both to achieve mixing and to open the better schools to black children. But we must recognize that as long as black children come burdened with cultural, psychological, and educational disadvantages, we will not attain truly integrated schooling. We will have moved bodies, but only obtained, often as not, two schools under one roof. Furthermore, we must recognize that no matter how much one talks about integration, white parents will resist it as long as they think that the admission of Blacks in number will dilute and downgrade their children's education. We must address ourselves then to the challenge of quality education in the ghetto schools, not as a gesture of defeat, not as an admission that integration has failed, but rather in recognition that it can best be realized when the predominantly black schools are more comparable in quality.

Across the country black parents are rousing themselves to the daily disaster that is the "education" afforded their children in neighborhood schools. They are exasperated not only by the deplorable and danger-

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ous physical conditions—the shattered windows and broken desks, the littered halls and crowded classrooms—but also by the tenor of the teaching. They no longer wish to accept for black children the crumbs of a white-oriented education. Organizing themselves into vocal groups, these parents are confronting the school boards and the teacher unions. They are not only calling attention to the intolerable conditions that prevail in the schools, but they are demanding a voice in their solution. Since their children are relegated to black schools, then let them be truly *their* schools and let them be made better. This awakened involvement is a sign of health. As we shall see later in this chapter, the thrust for community control is not devoid of conflict, nor of rhetoric, ambiguities, and real problems. But it is essentially healthy because it is realistic, because it recognizes that if the black child of the inner-city is to be saved today, he must be saved where he is today. As long as our long-range goals remain equally realistic, as long as we stay committed to an ultimately integrated society, then such an immediate focus is fruitful. In such a fashion can tactical separatism serve us.

Community Control

Discouragement with the interim results of desegregation in education has led some black spokesmen to reject the whole concept and to call for the establishment of separate and autonomous black and white school districts. Desegregation, they argue, has failed to improve education for black children; they point to areas where it has indeed been harmful to black children, to black teachers, and to the black community at

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large. They show how the introduction of our children into white schools is all too often their introduction to mistreatment and humiliation by bigoted white teachers and students; how they become captives in a hostile environment. Black teachers and school administrators, they point out, are often displaced or demoted once a unitary, white-dominated system is established. And black parents, geographically separated from the schools to which their children are bussed, are thereby hindered from participating in their children's education. Among the wider public the enforcement of desegregation often inflames prejudice and passions, promoting backlash and polarization.

Roy Innis, Director of CORE, seems to believe that the answer lies in the creation within each school system of two districts—one predominantly white and one predominantly black. Each would have its own board, each would hire its own superintendent. Each would be autonomous and equal.

On the face of it this proposal has the virtue of neatness. Parents and children alike would know where they stood. To many who are weary of struggling their way in a white world and fighting the white establishment, it has a certain appeal. But two factors in this type of solution arrest us: it is unworkable on a broad scale and it takes us back down the wrong road.

There are, of course, practical problems in such a plan. It could only work in cities where black and white residential patterns are homogeneously concentrated and susceptible of clear demarcation into distinct black and white school districts. It is not clear how it could be managed in cities where the black population is

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scattered or separated into nonadjacent neighborhoods.

Even if and where it could work, however, this plan would be unacceptable. It would legalize the separatism that exists and design new forms for it. It would institutionalize it, further embedding it into the machinery of our public life. We will not improve the quality of our ghetto schools to allow white America to forget about them; but that is just what will happen, as history has shown, if we separate off into our own school districts. Initially, while public opinion is focused on the issue, some progress might be made. But in a year or two, when the spotlight is no longer on them, the schools will fall back to where they were—and America's neglect of them will have been sanctioned. If we as Blacks sanction a structure of separatism, while the law calls for equality, then we are asking for what we get.

Few Blacks presently seek legalized separation in any form or area of life, but many are calling for community control—community control of schools, of police, of ghetto business, and urban planning. It is a noble cry. It bespeaks a new sense of involvement and responsibility. It expresses pride and determination. It is good. Yet lying in wait here are dangers similar to those that beset the strategies of separatism; we must alert ourselves to them and to the precise nature of what we want.

Many of us tend to think that control in and of itself can solve our problems. In reality, of course, control can operate to our advantage only if we have something to control, if we have the necessary resources of funds and skills. And it is folly to act as if the black

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community can generate all the resources it needs. History has hobbled us. In economic power, in management skills, we lag far behind. We need assistance, not proud isolation. We need to recognize that unless we take care control can, in some instances, cut us off from the source of supply.

When a school board slashes off a parcel of money and hands it to a neighborhood saying "You can spend this money the way you want," you can be sure that in a few years that neighborhood school will not have quality education. It will deteriorate because the attention and resources of the school system will be turned away from that community. The community will be deprived of the administrative services the central system could provide, as well as its experience, its expertise, and what innovative techniques it might acquire. For those resources, the community can substitute the pride and energy of the community, but not much more. What often results is a pooling of ignorance and of theories and notions of education that are more outmoded than those of the school board.

What is needed is community involvement and community pressure, but not, strictly speaking, control per se. Control is an empty blessing, a hollow mechanism, if it cuts us off from the source of supply. You think at first that you are getting a good deal because you had nothing before. You are pleased when someone hands you the hose and you assume that there is still water in it, because there was water before. Then you realize that it has become detached from the faucet, the pipeline is empty and you have cut yourself off from the resources of the larger society. The ghetto

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cannot generate these resources. Without enough money to pay for education, jobs, or housing, you get ghetto education, ghetto jobs, ghetto housing. If we want control, we must involve ourselves in the way life and funds flow in, and not cut ourselves off from them.

In rebuilding the riot-torn areas of Washington, we are insisting on the participation of the ghetto community. The Housing and Urban Development Committee of the City Council, of which I am chairman, has stressed the importance of community involvement in the plans for the burnt-out corridors, insisting that the Redevelopment Land Agency and the National Capital Planning Commission meet with the neighborhoods. At the same time, we are maintaining that the community's role is not exclusive. It is foolish for local residents to say that they do not want white involvement in the community, or that white businessmen should not come in. For in such a way would you build a community that is doomed to death. In addition to black business we need white business; we need racially integrated ownership and black employment at all levels, so that profits can flow into the community. Heretofore Blacks have been shut out of the economic life of their own neighborhoods. We will struggle to correct that, but the answer is not in shutting whites out. We need their involvement, the money and the managerial skills they can bring. We need their voices joined to ours as we fight for improved municipal services in the ghetto, for safer and cleaner streets and efficient mass transit. We cannot afford to exclude them. The solution to our powerlessness lies not there, but rather in shared decision making.

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The call for community control is healthy insofar as it stimulates the involvement of individuals and groups in the community. Its rhetoric can be beneficial, fanning our determination to identify with community problems and to assume a responsible role. But we must always take care that we do not let it become a wall between us and the outside world, cutting us off from the resources we need.

We will not advance by doing the same thing to the white man that he did to us. Excluding him is depriving ourselves because he still holds the trump cards. Nor is that the kind of society we want to build. We do not seek to turn the tables. What we want is rather to put all the legs of the table squarely on the floor, so that we can proceed to build a solid society on the only firm foundation available to us—that of ultimate equality and integration.

5

*Alliances for Change***Beyond Color**

Entering the 70's we see the depth of the crisis that is wracking the country. We Blacks are beginning to recognize that the problem we have been attacking, the disease we have been fighting, has gone beyond the confines of racism. America's treatment of Blacks has so corrupted her soul that now she is treating others in the same way, whether they be villagers of Indochina, migrant laborers in California, or her own rebellious students. She has become the victim of her own racial cruelty and injustice. Brutalized by her own brutality, her vision has become dimmer, her conscience duller, her sensitivities thickened, to the point where she can now look with indifference upon her own, the whites who are hungry, jobless, miseducated; to the point where she can turn with thuggish fury against her own children. The mentality revealed in the Kent State shootings is one with which we Blacks are familiar. And it is not unrelated to the mentality that

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expressed itself in the massacres of My-Lai; it has the same roots.

One cannot blind oneself to social injustice without paying a price. We see America paying that price now. We see it in her increasing reliance upon physical force and what she calls "law and order." We see it in her fear of dissent and in the angers that are splitting the country and polarizing it now, white against white. Earlier in this book we noted that as the scene of the civil rights struggle moved to the North, the Blacks found that the "enemy was everywhere." Now we are seeing that not only is the enemy everywhere but so are his victims. And they are not all black.

The civil rights movement, as we knew it, had a crucial role to play and played it well. It awakened America to the problem of racial injustice and it awakened the black man himself. It attacked the laws which sanctioned prejudice and segregation. Although, as we have learned, that represents only a fraction of the job to be done, it did perform it. Now we must go beyond that.

By this I mean that as we attack white racism we must see it in perspective, in terms of the whole mentality of which it is a part. We must sharpen our perceptions so that we can see all the manifestations of this disease and the manner in which they related to each other. We must understand that racial injustice is inseparable from social injustice whatever the color of the victim. We cannot afford to be parochial or to maintain that the problems of black America are separate and distinct. We must broaden our conception of

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our struggle both in terms of its goals and of its constituency.

In earlier writings I have expressed my belief that the salvation of America is black. This was the conviction of Dr. King and many a local leader in the movement in the early 60's: that in his struggle for justice the black man could redeem the soul of America. As I see history unfold, the depth of the crisis gripping America, I am led to believe even more strongly that Blacks can play this role — but not if we interpret narrowly our interests and our aims. We must have the vision and the stature to see that what we work for and whom we work with cannot be defined in terms of color alone.

Since the mid-60's many have said that the civil rights movement is dead. Many voices have pronounced its funeral oration: Our forces are now scattered, our policies divided. Looking at the national scene, we recognize that indeed the day of mass organization, of causes and slogans, is past. For one thing the national temper is too dislocated and distraught to permit it. Furthermore, the obstacles we face are of such shifting complexity that we cannot effectively attack them broadside. We cannot move against them in a frontal assault, with a simple set of demands. The day is past when we find it useful to rally to inspired oratory and march out together arms linked. That kind of leadership and that kind of response belongs now to history. Inspiration is no longer enough, nor is courage enough, nor sympathy, nor devotion. If dying were enough, we could perhaps persuade ourselves to do that and march out into bullets. But dying, as we have seen, is not the

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answer either. All that is too simple, too innocent, for this embittered and exhausted time. We don't have that kind of faith in each other any more. We are bone-weary of "causes."

Now this is not all to the bad. Movements can burn themselves out. Causes can get lost in rhetoric, they can become hollow with clichés and slogans. They relate more to feeling than action. People, especially white liberals, tend to join for an emotional trip, and when the millennium does not dawn overnight, they are disillusioned, their enthusiasm spent.

Therefore, I see it as a hopeful sign that increasing numbers of young activists today, black and white, are more problem-oriented than cause-oriented. They are less interested in organizational attachments and political labels than they are in specific issues, be they free-ways or tenants' rights or welfare practices. And that is good because people are more capable of continued dogged effort on a particular problem and a plan of action than they are for a general cause, like brotherhood or even civil rights.

The pattern that is evolving, therefore, is one in which THE movement is replaced by an array of little movements, pragmatic and ad hoc actions centering around specific needs. A pattern where the solution to immediate problems takes precedence over idealism. A pattern in which people support us less with an attitude of "We are for you because we believe in equality," than with one of "We will work with you because *we need you* in order to achieve..." whatever it may be—a safer city, a better school system, an election.

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Ad Hoc Alliances

Key to the flexibility we must employ is the recognition that we can count on no permanent alliances. Furthermore, it is a mistake, a waste of time, and a diversion of our energies, to try to forge them. Just as we have learned that no one movement or massive organization can carry forward the full weight of our struggle, so we are learning that there will be no partnerships in which we will find a full and enduring unity of purpose. Where are all our old allies now? Thousands of our former co-workers in the civil rights movement have left and gone on to other causes, the peace movement, the fight against pollution. Others have found that their interests conflict with the goals of racial equality.

A case in point is that of organized labor in America. For years we became accustomed to seeing labor as our strongest organized ally; and truly, on matters that transcended union practices, on issues that were political and social, it was. We owe organized labor a great debt. We fully realize how much we benefit directly from the social legislation in welfare, social security, and community services that, inadequate though they may be, would never have come to pass without the support of organized labor. More specifically, we remember how labor leadership contributed to the civil rights movement itself, providing funds and organizers, and helping us to get our message across. Indeed, since all our other support came from individuals and voluntary groups, labor was our only ally with massive power. Some of us and many of our liberal

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white friends fell into the assumption that this coalition had something eternal about it.

I remember when I first learned, back with the Urban League in Akron, Ohio, that there was no such permanent alliance. A televised hearing was being held in the union hall concerning a new labor contract with the transit company and a fare raise that the company wanted to effect. Organized labor was heavily represented on the local Urban League board, and it anticipated the League's full support. When I raised my hand to speak, they hurried over with the microphone, "Yes, there's brother Tucker; let's hear what he has to say."

I favored the new contract, I said, but then I also said that a nondiscriminatory clause should be included in it. Just as the company was being unfair to organized labor, so was organized labor being unfair to black people; and I pointed out that not a single black driver was employed by the company. Well, the mike was rushed away from me—but fast. Beginning the next day the heat was put on me and efforts made to get me fired. Presumably, I was not supposed to raise the issue of race; I was to support the alliance.

Now the failures of the labor unions to put racial equality into practice are well documented. I need not list here the many methods they employ to restrict black workers from the better-paying jobs, the higher-skilled crafts, and leadership roles in the unions. We had hoped that with the merger of the AFL-CIO, the industrial unions, which had been more hospitable to Blacks, would have a beneficial effect on the practices and attitudes of the craft unions. But those hopes

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were dashed, as was symbolically evident in the withdrawal from the AFL-CIO of that champion of civil rights, Walter Reuther. He saw, as we did, that labor had lost its revolutionary spirit. Preoccupied with the acquisition of material security, they were losing sight of the goals of social and economic justice.

Organized labor is now falling into the trap that it avoided in the 30's, that of seeing the black man as a threat—not as a co-worker and colleague in the fight for economic justice, but as a competitor to be put down and shut out. And we enter the 70's beholding a sad irony: a polarization of forces in the country which is aligning vast segments of the white working class on the side of conservatism and reaction.

We encounter this daily. As we struggle to gain access to the employment provided, for example, by federal construction, we find the power of organized labor arrayed against us. In our efforts in city after city to get some of the contracts our tax dollars are paying for, to find jobs in the programs that are slated for our own black ghettos, our allies are not the unions. Our support, when we can get it, now comes from government and private enterprise. We must be flexible and imaginative to employ this support effectively and to expand it. We are entering a period when we may have to use industry as industry earlier tried to use us: to break the unions. For this the formation of black craft unions may be a temporary necessity.

Tactical ad hoc alliances, geared to the specific issue at hand, must be formed. In each situation, we must sort out the forces and find that group or that person who can help us. To illustrate this let me go back to

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the incident in Akron. I knew I could not beat the transit workers' union by just standing up and preaching, and I knew I had to build up some support so that they could not get to me. So I went another route. Knowing that the City Council would have some say in the labor contract I approached them with a committee from the Urban League. The councilmen were not particularly noted for their civil rights fervor, but they did agree, when I confronted them, that Blacks had a right to drive busses in the city. We built an alliance on that point and succeeded in including in the contract a clause on fair employment.

In such a way do we repeatedly find that we can build and benefit from temporary alliances. They do not need to last forever nor do they need to include agreement on anything beyond the immediate issue. We can forego the luxury of ideological unity and address ourselves only to that particular point where our interests happen to meet.

It follows that on each issue the alliances we form will vary. The support we recruit as we campaign for more tax dollars for ghetto schools will be different from that which we enlist in a fight, say, for a rapid transit route. In the latter case we might gather such diverse elements as the suburban industries which need workers, the municipal government which seeks to lower the city's unemployment rate, and suburban residents who want transportation between home and their job in the city.

The point is to mobilize all resources possible, regardless of their political and biological coloration, and regardless of their motive. Those whom we fight with a

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tenant strike may well be those we will work with on the issue of drug abuse. As white suburban parents awaken in alarm to the problem of narcotics among their children, they become potential allies in our efforts to secure a police crackdown on the traffic of dope in the ghetto. A whole spectrum of ad hoc alliances is possible if we are sufficiently flexible to take advantage of them.

A clear example of this flexibility can be seen in the operations, on the national level here in Washington, of the NAACP. The NAACP's national man for labor affairs, Herbert Hill, is a constant thorn in the side of organized labor, calling public attention to its discriminatory practices and campaigning for their remedy; but while on issues related to employment black America battles against the unions, their interests coincide on many a political and social question. And while Herbert Hill fights the unions on one hand, on the other Clarence Mitchell, the NAACP Washington bureau chief, can work in tandem with them, creating a massive front that led to the defeat of the Haynsworth and Carswell nominations.

The more specific the issue, we often find, the stronger is the thrust we can make. By narrowing the focus we can intensify the impact. The Urban League, for example, used to have an employment committee and it was assumed that it would operate on the whole broad front of job opportunities and discrimination. Then we altered our approach. In keeping with the League's New Thrust tactics, we adopted the mechanism of the task force, specifically focused on one problem. We formed a task force to challenge the local, pri-

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vately-owned electric company, and one called GUARD, which spells Government Employees United Against Racial Discrimination; and we found that each had a vitality that the old employment committee could never have reached. They were active and effective because they were aimed at specific issues, because these issues were of immediate personal concern to the members, and because no energy was siphoned off to other organizational or programmatic needs.

Some young activists today, both black and white, take the position that if you enter any alliances, or if you engage in any cooperative efforts with elements of the system, you are in danger of being "co-opted." By the current pejorative use of the term "co-optation," they mean that their moral position would be weakened, their efforts diluted, their goals subverted. Some young Blacks, especially those engaged in separatist dialectics, claim that this will happen if Blacks work with non-black groups, that whitey will take over. This is a legitimate concern, but not when the coalitions you form are on a short-term, ad hoc basis. No such threat looms if your commitments are confined to the current tactic. If you keep your ultimate allegiances your own, and your efforts clearly focused on the immediate problem, you are not in danger of co-optation, of selling out, or being used.

Other black leaders, who are less shy of entanglements, wonder how we can re-enlist our white co-workers who left the civil rights movement for anti-war activity and ecological reform. How can we again recruit their resources, their organizational skills, and their money? Now realistically we cannot think in terms

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of bringing the peace movement or the environment movement back to the civil rights cause as such. But we do not need to attempt that; for we can accomplish a great deal as we break up our "cause" around specific problems faced by Blacks. Not everyone is equally interested in open employment or housing; not all our potential allies are concerned about police practices or urban education; but on each separate issue there are many whose interests merge with ours and whose efforts can be enlisted. If we are realistic and practical, we can use them. If we seek to work through ad hoc coalitions and task forces, rather than through one broad, ideologically-based crusade, then we can organize effectively for common gain.

The New "Niggers"

We find other potential alliances appearing on the horizon, alliances with those who, like us to some measure, have been deprived of full participation in the system. Robert Theobald, that perceptive social thinker, has characterized our time as one of the revolution of the power'ess—referring to the minority groups, the youth and students, the poor, the women. All these are now challenging with growing strength the supremacy of the white, male Anglo establishment. And the evidences of this challenge multiply around us daily, sometimes in overt demands and demonstrations, but often in ways so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. Claims that seemed novel and even ludicrous a year ago are now taken seriously, or at least matter-of-factly.

So far, except for the poor, whom the Southern Christian Leadership Conference sought to include with

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us in a broad front, and, in some isolated cases, the students, we have not attempted to make common cause with these other groups among the "powerless." But we need to teach ourselves to become aware of the possibilities that are emerging—that can swell our numbers in a system where weight and numbers count.

Like most American men I have been unable to appreciate fully the serious nature of the women's liberation movement. For a black man particularly, it is hard to accord it complete respect, for when we see middle-class white women parading and picketing (and they are almost totally white and privileged), their tactics seem a self-indulgence. We think of their economic security, their leisure, their decent homes, and their gifts of education and wish that our own black women were half so "deprived."

Furthermore, it is hard to credit their female protestations of discrimination and powerlessness when we in our own black communities are accustomed to strong and aggressive, if not outright domineering women—mothers and wives who are very often the breadwinners and disciplinarians, defenders of the homes, and pillars of the community. Look at any inner-city neighborhood organization and you will find these strong women assuming leadership roles. Indeed among ghetto-dwellers the black male ego has been so trampled on by social and economic forces, so cheated of its natural role in the family, that the mere idea of further liberating women strikes a chilling and unwelcome note. To Black cultural nationalists, for example, the concept of liberation includes the liberation and assertion of that male role, a desire which Ron Karenga expresses

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transparently when he says, "What makes a woman appealing is femininity, but she can't be feminine without being submissive." To this he adds, "Equality is false; it is the devil's concept."

The relation of the black American to this movement, however, is more complicated than that of bemused onlooker. When we step back and take a long look we see that it is historically linked to us; in a way we spawned it. Just as the 19th-century feminism that ultimately won women's suffrage was born out of the abolitionist struggle, so has the current feminism evolved out of the civil rights movement of the last decade. Its spirit, its rhetoric, and even some of its tactics echo our movement; indeed it was in our ranks that many of its leading organizers were first involved in social action, where they cut their teeth. It is as if, after working for years for the rights of Blacks, they woke up one morning to the fact that they themselves, though white, did not fully enjoy these rights and responsibilities. And they convey their newly awakened appreciation of their status in blunt terms: "woman as nigger." Their anger as they confront the extent to which they believe they have been exploited, and the pride and strength they seem to find in this anger, cannot but be reminiscent of the personal experience of many a black militant.

Now interestingly enough, women's liberation seems in turn to have increased their sensitivity to the frustrations of black America. A white woman who has been active in the Urban League said to me recently, in speaking of the new feminism, "Although I have worked for a long time in civil rights, I feel that now

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for the first time I really understand, I feel viscerally, what the black movement is about. It's not only knowing what it's like to have a college education and be offered a porter's job. It's also the deep anger we feel at the well-meaning but contemptuous men and at our sisters who play up to them and sell out for a subservient role; it's sensing for the first time the anger you Blacks must feel for the patronizing liberals and for the Uncle Toms."

Whatever our personal biases, I suggest that we try to put them aside and be open to the possibilities for collaboration, for as allies these women are not to be lightly dismissed. Women constitute 53 per cent of the population and control most of the society's free wealth. Their feminist organizations and consequently the pressure they can generate are increasing at a rapid rate. Some political strategists feel that there is political potential in a new reform party based on the support of the Blacks, the poor, the intellectuals—and the women.

Short of such a political coalition, certain specific issues, such as employment, day-care centers, and welfare rights, are natural targets for collaboration between Blacks and the women's liberation movement. Their active concern for public pre-school and day-care centers echoes the urgent needs of the black community. Their championing of equal pay for women has importance not only for black women, who are always at the lowest rung of the ladder, but also for their families, for whom the mother is the sole support. And the legions of our welfare mothers can use their help

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in the struggle for a program that will afford them, with dignity, the means to raise a family.

Other voices of the powerless are now beginning to make themselves heard — the “browns,” as the other minorities, especially the Spanish-speaking Americans, are called. Like most of black America they too are in a state of semi-colonial dependence on white society. One of the values of the Poor People’s Campaign, although unfortunately it was never developed, was in pointing the way to a broadening of our movement. Here with the other minorities, who also suffer injustices, is real potential for building a broader base. Such alliances, however, will require patience and hard work.

Families from the Caribbean and Latin America are pouring into our urban centers. As they do they find themselves confronted with unemployment and subjected in large numbers to the same conditions of sanitation, housing, schooling we know. They would seem natural allies in our fight against the institutions which perpetuate the ghetto. Here in Washington, D.C., alone, their community, which has enough cultural distinction to constitute a real *barrio*, numbers from 50,000 to 70,000. In New York and other Eastern seaboard cities, cheek-by-jowl with the Blacks, are the Puerto Ricans. In the West are the Chicanos. And in all these situations coalitions for our benefit and theirs could be formed. New vistas of strategy could be opened up, where we reinforce each other in our efforts to win better public services and decentralized community control.

Real difficulties, however, present themselves. They spring from the hispanic way of life, the nature of the

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latinos' needs as they now see them, and their attitudes toward Blacks.

Their present state of mind is not conducive to political activism. Accustomed in very many cases to political oppression and having known living conditions even worse than these, they are not generally protest-oriented. Furthermore, many lie low because they do not have proper papers, either for working or extending their stay, and they live in fear of deportation. Compounding these causes of their passivity is the strongly family-centered culture they have brought with them. Within the home, all-important to them, they find their solace and release. Their latin pride inhibits them from revealing their troubles, exposing themselves to someone outside *el pueblo*. So while their growing numbers and their concentrations in the inner-city would give promise of their utility as potential allies, their "revolutionary awareness" is low. They are generally—in contrast to the Mexican-American agricultural workers who have learned how to unite in bold action—not ready to be organized on a broad scale.

Where local hispanic organizations have sprung up, the needs they voice are to date largely cultural. In Washington, D.C., for example, the problems they attack are related to language and their desire to maintain cultural identity against the erosions of Anglo society. Over half of the local latino community speaks no English, and they suffer accordingly in school, in applying for jobs, in dealings with the police. Their primary goals consist of bilingual educational programs, Spanish-speaking police contingents, and the like. They are proud of their language and do not want to lose

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it in the melting pot. As their younger generation grows up, however, their goals will inevitably broaden, as the programs of such groups as the Young Lords in New York show.

Further hindering their cooperation with us are the sticky problems of prejudice and competition. There is real ambivalence here: they do not want to identify with American Blacks because they do not wish to see themselves as part of the same problem, they are glad to speak Spanish so as not to be mistaken for Negro; but at the same time they are often jealous and resentful of the fact that Blacks seem to be getting all the public attention and assistance that is directed toward the inner-city. Furthermore, those who are beginning to be politically active fear that in joining the Blacks they will lose their own leadership.

The Urban League has endeavored to bridge the gap by employing some latinos on local staffs; but the success of this among the black community is not yet clear. For the truth is that at this point in history we Blacks are more politically aggressive than the "browns." Part of our growing political sophistication is due to our acceptance of ourselves as an exploited group, a point which many other minority elements have not yet reached. For essential to the cure is diagnosis of the disease; part of becoming equal is recognizing that you are not.

But while latino-Americans are largely apolitical now, the potential for activism is there and will inevitably grow as the plight of the cities worsens. To select the slate and to launch the campaign that resulted in the election of Kenneth Gibson, Newark's

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first black mayor, a convention was held. It was, virtually, a black convention: whites were excluded, but Puerto Ricans, who represent 10 per cent of Newark's voters, were not. Thus a coalition was formed to break the hold of the Italian machine. Of the slate of six city councilmen selected, one was Puerto Rican. I hope and believe that this strategy will become a pattern in other cities with sizable brown populations. And the sooner the better.

We must keep the door open to a wide variety of possibilities for united action. It will not be easy, it will not be any love feast, because our life styles are very different and because we have stepped on each other in competing for the same jobs. But you do not need to love people in order to work with them. We can use their numbers in building pressure for change, in our confrontations with City Hall, with the police departments, the school boards, the landlords, as we strive for quality in our urban life.

Instruments Without Color

Eldridge Cleaver said once, "There are a lot of whites who will go to any length to aid their black comrades. We know this." In general we *do* know it, once we stop venting our generalized bitterness and blinding ourselves in fascination with our own blackness. I don't know that I would agree with Cleaver that they would "go to any length," but my point is that whites can be useful, that even a short "length" is better than none, and that it is a serious mistake to think that only Blacks can serve the black cause. Sometimes whites can serve the cause better than our own

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black brothers. A current case of this comes to my mind.

From my post on City Council I have watched the young lawyers of the Neighborhood Legal Services Program at work. This program, sponsored by the Office of Economic Opportunity and rightly considered one of the best in the country, serves the poor of the inner-city who could not otherwise afford any legal counsel or representation. Most of these lawyers are young, white, from the better law schools, dedicated to protecting the rights of their predominantly black clientele and hell-bent on bringing about change. I know this firsthand because some of them have ridden my back at City Hall and ridden it effectively. The housing regulations we passed in June 1970, redefining landlord-tenant rights and relationships, were due in part to their insistent efforts. In these regulations we incorporated the new decisions they had won in the courts.

I have watched them at work at the bar, pushing relentlessly, not giving an inch, taking their clients' cases right up to the Court of Appeals and winning precedents that in three landmark cases this year carved out new laws protecting tenants' rights. No longer can a tenant be threatened with retaliatory eviction if he brings grievances of code violations. No longer is a lease considered valid where violations exist; rent can be legitimately withheld until repairs are made, thus legalizing rent strikes. In a field where the weight of the law has traditionally favored the landlord, these are pioneering cases, and though these decisions have no jurisdiction outside the District of Columbia, their implications will have an effect across the country.

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One does not generally see private lawyers or law firms handling this kind of case, except on rare occasions; like many judges, they consider it a nuisance, a waste of time. There is no money in it. But these young lawyers worked as diligently for their clients as if they were getting a million dollar fee for each case, fighting every inch of the way. They were often abrasive and irritating in the process; they stepped on a lot of toes; they made mistakes; but the results were phenomenal, showing how great is the potential in our system for this kind of action.

Meanwhile from behind the scenes emerges a conflict between the majority of the young white lawyers in the NLSP and the board, whose director and many of whose members are black. The Blacks on the board have criticized the lawyers for neglecting the service aspects of their legal work in order to concentrate on precedent-making cases, while for their part forty of the lawyers have called for the resignation of the director and four have quit. The Blacks on the board have implied that race is an issue here, that these young whippersnappers resent black supervision; this, however, is highly unlikely in view of the fact that the lawyers had at the outset insisted, voting 40 to 1, that their director be black. One can legitimately argue that more time should be spent representing the poor on the routine cases, but probably closer to the cause of the conflict is the ideological bent of the Blacks on the board. They are in general simply more conservative, more fearful of rocking the boat and more sensitive to the local voices that have attacked the young lawyers for driving too hard.

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I recognize again that the establishment can put more pressure on Blacks than it can on dedicated whites, whose place in society is more secure. And many Blacks succumb to this pressure because they want, in the last analysis, to become part of the establishment more than they want to change it. My purpose here is not to judge the parties involved, but to point out that, as in this program, there are many ways in which whites can serve the cause of black people, and that often they are psychologically freer to do so than many of our own leaders and professional men. It is folly to say that the "enemy is the honky" and that only Blacks can help each other.

Howard University, under its new president, Dr. James Cheek, is redefining itself as a black-oriented institution. It has decided to act on the premise that America needs one seat of learning that is devoted to helping Blacks understand themselves and prepare themselves to serve the goals of black people; that is dedicated to producing not just more college graduates, but leaders, technicians, and social servants equipped with the skills and sensitivity to deal with America's most critical problem. Howard has elected to do this.

At a luncheon, a white minister at our table, whose wife had been teaching at Howard, asked Dr. Cheek what role now, if any, the white person would have. In answer Dr. Cheek replied that it depended on the white person. The goals of the university are now clear; any white instructor or professor who can serve these goals, who can help equip black students for the tasks they choose, who can help sensitize America to this issue, will find a role.

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In similar fashion we must always strive to keep clear in our minds the distinction between the end and the means, the goal and the instrument. We must not fall into the trap of identifying one with the other. To consider replacing the white lawyers of the NLSP with black lawyers is to make this confusion, at real cost to our own purposes. The black neighborhood women of Anacostia in Southeast Washington knew this when they sat in and barricaded the local office of the NLSP so that the young white lawyer there could not move out as ordered by his superiors. They were not interested in the color of his skin, but in the quality of his services.

If our goal is unswerving, then we should be able to use any instrument, whichever is best, regardless of its color. The instrument as such *has* no color, if the goal is ours.

Working with Whitey

There are problems involved, however, in working with white folk. The problems are difficult to appraise and to handle precisely because they emerge in our working relationships not with our foes but with our friends and allies. They are sore points where our reactions, our judgments, and expectations of each other can build resentments within us, and they are areas also where collaboration can blur the picture for us and subvert our goals. We must recognize these problems, we must see them for what they are so that we can steer clear of pitfalls and avoid falling prey to a generalized distrust that would isolate and immobilize us.

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Our deepest anger with the white man is perhaps this: that he still thinks that the problem is ours. To him equality for the black man is, finally, the black man's problem. If this were not so he would not have let himself be so easily turned off by whatever rhetoric happened to be current among black spokesmen. When the black power cry led some organizations to say, "We don't need or want whitey, we'll do it alone," he simply withdrew. By letting himself be so easily put off, he said in effect to us, "Okay, if you don't want me to help you, I won't; it's your problem."

Recently the deeply moving film that chronicled the life and work of Dr. King was shown here, taking us all back through the struggles, triumphs, and defeats of the civil rights movement. After the showing I overheard a white acquaintance who had worked in the movement say soberly, "I feel ashamed. Why did we give up so easily? Why did we slow down our efforts? Simply because the black power guys didn't want us was no reason for us to stop working as hard as we could."

Most whites are far from any recognition of this kind. They see race in America as "the black problem," not the white problem. And the reason for this distorted perception is quite simple: they can escape.

To us racism is a condition we cannot take flight from; not only does it determine the course and the setting of our lives, but it colors every day of that existence, every encounter with the larger society, every venture we undertake. It is a yoke we cannot shed. But the white man, for all his good will and fine statements, for all his accurate acknowledgment of the causes of

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racism and the responsibility of whites, can escape. He can come and go. For all his moral commitment he can, when he is tired, sneak off. Weary from organizing or picketing at our side, depressed from long, discouraging meetings for equal rights, he can slip away, flee to a safe haven and forget it all.

Now we cannot blame the white man for being able to escape, and it is human enough for him to enjoy his prerogatives; but it constitutes a world of difference between us. And it gives him a distance from the problem which seduces him into seeing it as ours. This knowledge is bitter for us, for we know the problem of racism is essentially his: it is the injustice, the greed, the indifference, the violence of *his* society; we know the solution is ultimately in *his* hands. And we see that even when he is most sympathetic, it is simply not that important to him. He can always sneak off.

This is very hard to accept, but we must be realistic about it and not weigh ourselves down with resentment. If white people cannot, by reason of their situation, share the full measure of our commitment to racial equality, then let us simply face that fact and not waste our emotions expecting them to do so.

Related to this is that distrust of white allies which is rooted in our knowledge that in the last analysis they are and always will be—the establishment. Even when they are working at our side, this is so; even when their political stance veers all the way to the most radical revolutionary, they belong, when the chips are down, to that establishment that has oppressed our generations. We sense this; we sense allegiances of theirs of which they themselves may not be aware, and

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we know that we cannot count on them all the way. For all their good intentions and their moral conscience, which I do not deny, they are nurtured by a system that is racist. Privilege and security are the air they breathe. Though willing in varying degrees to change, they can go only so far. It is not always a simple question of bigotry or greed; even in the generous and the noble their loyalties to their children who have been raised in privilege outweigh their commitment to those who have known none. Their attitude toward change cannot be the same as ours, for we do not stand on the same ground. We do not breathe the same air.

We may resent this, but we do not need to let ourselves be stalemated by this resentment. Whereas the separatist says that because the white man is ultimately part and parcel of the establishment we cannot and should not work with him, I say that we can. We can, but we must be realistic about it. We must start with him where he is, using his power to attack issues on which our interests overlap and not expecting him to go all the way, to identify truly with us.

The whites' psychological distance from the problem can create certain difficulties of which we need to be aware if we are to stay on course toward our own goals. Partly because he himself senses this distance, the white man seeks to overcome it through emotional and dramatic involvement. He engages out of the need for catharsis, the need to espouse a cause more than to gain a specific end. The process can become more gratifying to him than the goal. It gives him a sense of purpose, of valor, of moral status—a sense of being alive in that

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sick, dead-end white society of his for which he is beginning to lose his taste.

All this, of course, can be of use to us in our fight for freedom as long as we do not succumb to his view of this struggle as a basically theatrical action. The danger in this view is that Blacks can tend to become for him mere symbolic figures in a drama: they can become his playthings, acting out his fantasies of revolt as if they were on stage instead of real life. From the white man's distance revolution looks romantic. College-age revolutionaries are trying hard to enlist young black militants. Having symbolic Blacks handy for display is apparently as important for them as it has been for their white liberal parents. But the perceptive young Black recognizes the revolutionary activity of these SDS-type groups as essentially play-acting. He sees them as seeking the pretext of a noble cause to indulge their taste for violence and to vent their diffuse rage against the system. Now black rage is not diffuse: we know its causes and its targets; and if we had a thirst for violence, it has long been slaked. Those who grew up in the ghetto and know the realities of police repression find little purpose or catharsis in provoking violence, in engineering confrontations, in baiting cops. Furthermore, they know that when the reaction comes, black skulls will be cracked and black bodies thrown into the paddywagon sooner and faster than white ones. Not only does violence hold less romance for Blacks than for middle-class whites, it holds vastly more danger. That recognition has led many to the belief that what white radicals want is for the Blacks to do their fighting for them. Just as their forebears

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used black bodies to pick the cotton and break the strikes, so do they now aim to use them as pawns in their dreams of revolution.

During the disturbances at Yale University that surrounded the trial of the Black Panthers, the New Haven Black Coalition, a conglomerate of more than forty local groups, released a statement:

They [white radicals] are working out their own agenda in the political atmosphere that surrounds this trial. From their sometimes contradictory rhetoric and frantic posturing, Blacks can see that the white radicals are only different from their daddys and granddaddys in the callous manipulation of black people. . . . The truth in New Haven, as in most of the country, is that the white radical, by frantically and selfishly seeking his personal psychological release, is sharing in the total white conspiracy of denial against black people.

A community organizer in Houston said recently in commenting on the discouragement of the local black community: "The white radicals have heightened the action, but then they fade into the landscape, hard for the man to find. But he can always find black folks."

We hardly need the "action heightened" and we cannot feel gratitude for this kind of help; we need solid, concrete, dogged assistance toward solid, concrete ends.

It is not only the white radicals who are eager for Blacks to do their fighting for them. I have had white liberal audiences tell me that I am a tool of the establishment. When I pursue their reasoning it comes down not to a question of issues, but to a question of style. I conclude that not only do white liberals feel that it is my problem to solve, instead of theirs, but

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they want me to do their job for them in the way that is the most emotionally satisfying for them. But I cannot survive, I cannot operate with their kind of anger. "If I were a black man," they will say, "I would be setting America on fire." If I thought that that would solve the problem, perhaps I would too, because I have that much anger in me. But one thing I have learned is that passion alone is poor strategy.

When I was in college I was an angry young man; and when I went to work for the Urban League in Akron I was still extremely impatient. A lady who had been on the staff for twenty years would say to me as I pushed for drastic action, "You are young now, but you will understand some day why it cannot be done that way." That would make me furious. It still annoys me to hear people make statements like that, for they often seem to mean, "accept the status quo and get change as it comes."

Now when I say that I cannot afford to be angry, I mean that like a fighter or a football player I cannot afford to lose my head. The rage must be controlled, channelled, used rationally. I must be angry in a way that harnesses my energy and my wits, not with a dizzy fury that deprives my senses of their judgment. I cannot indulge in emotional catharsis, I cannot afford that luxury. I think that if I were white I might well be among the radicals and revolutionaries; I would be readier to strike out and shout and resort to violence, because I would need to feel the pain. Because I would sense upon me the burden of guilt and responsibility; and because I would fear the numbness, the death of the soul, that can come with the acceptance of un-

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deserved privilege. But for us Blacks the problems are too real, too constant, too inescapable, to let passion take over, beclouding the struggle, confusing the issue.

Because that is a real danger to us, we resent the tendency of white liberals to adulate black groups that call themselves revolutionary. Sitting secure in their luxurious comforts they fawn on those who feel driven to violence. Titillated by the color and excitement and glamor of it, they spur them on, as if they were actors on the stage. It has reached the point where we see Black Panthers become the darlings of Park Avenue, sought after by jet-set hostesses who vie for black revolutionaries as star attractions for their dinner parties.

Those of us who must fight the fight, those of us to whom the racial struggle is not a spectator sport, resent this glamorizing of the nihilism of violence. Recently a letter to the press from a black woman in Oakland caught my eye. I think it conveys something of the black community's reaction to this white encouragement of black radicals:

In close to two years in the Bay Area, I would be appalled at the efforts of the mass media to enshrine the ignorant ruffians, the Black Panthers, as the Negro's leaders were it not for the fact that I had already witnessed the attempted purging of the Negro community's true leadership in other organs of the country and by means of broadcast journalism. Is your aim a socio-political revolution, using Negroes as shock troops? ... Are you attempting to provoke a civil war within the Negro community in which responsible Negroes will be killed off by your "new breed of intelligent forceful cats who hate the Negroes" ... the more easily to ready the "colored lum-

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penproletariat" for the concentration camp or the slow boat to Africa?

I don't know quite yet how it is going to come about but someday we are going to be free of all of you, phoney-baloney, beery white liberals and swaggering foul-mouthed black militants who still can't confront The Man without a mob at their backs, a gun in hand, a pile of wool on their heads. . . . No, I don't know how we're going to swing it, but you can bet we're going to swing it. Like Martin Luther King promised, we're going to be "Free at last! Great God A'Mighty, free at last!"

And, I would add, we are not going to be free, if we do not learn to work with whites. If we do and if we are to stay in control of ourselves and our actions, however, we must be alert to this tendency on the part of many of our well-wishers to push us to a more radical posture. We must watch out for it because we are the ones who pay the price for it, who suffer most when protest becomes theatrical. And the price is high. It is reckoned by the response of fear and repressive reaction which radical acts provoke. It is measured also by the loss of the real gains we might otherwise have made; for radical rhetoric tends to become an end in itself, it creates an illusion of change while short-circuiting real action.

As we look at these problems that can emerge as we work with whitey and as we encounter them in real life, we remember one thing—that effective collaboration with someone does not depend on the degree of our approval. Our action should be freed of our need to judge. If he does not have "soul," that is his loss, not ours. If he is hung up on certain material needs or

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emotional biases, that is his problem, not ours. So we acknowledge afresh that we do not have to love the white man and we do not have to hate him. He who hates is as dependent on the object of his feelings as he who loves. We do not need to abuse the white man any more than we need to lick his boots. Neither posture reflects our complicated relationship, neither is productive. It is in the maturity of emotional detachment that we can best use him and take from him what he has to offer; and only when that detachment exists can true liberation and equality come.

6

Blacks and the Broader Issues

More Than Black or White

The nature of the American crisis and the national mood it produces require flexibility in our strategies. We must be flexible enough to work in areas where color is not the central issue. We need the vision to see the relevance to black America of those major issues of the day which do not appear to be race-related. We need the versatility to work within them for our ends, in coalition with whomever can be useful to us.

In the last analysis, the problem of race in America will be solved not when whites are helping Blacks out of the goodness of their hearts, but when whites are helping Blacks out of their own self-interest. This is no expression of cynicism. We know this because we know that no man is an island; and slowly white America is learning this too.

White America is learning that she cannot hide forever from black America, just as she cannot flee for long the smog of our inner-cities. She can run to the fresh air of suburbia, but soon that too is contami-

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nated. She can try to ignore the use of excessive force by her police, but soon it is *her* children who are getting beaten, killed. She can accept the continuation of segregated schooling and segregated neighborhoods, but slowly it becomes clear that her own young are also impoverished by it, and alienated. The revolt of white youth today springs in large measure from their discovery of society's hypocrisies. They hear the pious parental claims of racial equality and react with distrust and contempt.

Our strategies must be flexible enough to exploit white needs and white self-interest. Avoiding racial rhetoric, we can turn to concrete issues that affect, each in its own way, our common lot, black and white. To do this we must rise above the American habit of categorizing issues by color.

We are angry because white America thinks of civil rights as the black man's problem. As they see it, white men have no problem with race, black men do. The ball always ends up in our court, as if the problem resided in our unhappiness. We bitterly resent this attitude. Yet *we* pigeonhole problems too: Indochina is a white man's war, and resistance to the war is *his* problem. Pollution is *his* bag, not ours, let him cope with the fatal wastes of his industrial wealth. The rising crime rates that alarm him, well let him quake behind his armies of police, he deserves to taste the fear we have lived with.

It is time we outgrow this, even if white America does not. If we are serious about survival, we must cease appraising issues in terms of black and white. Dr. King was leading in this direction at the end, call-

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ing us to see that poverty transcended race and that we must attack in it an enemy common to both black and white. It is time all of us recaptured that glimpse of a common destiny.

Perhaps it has been a mistake for us to focus for so long on the issue of race. After the Supreme Court decisions and the legislation we won in the civil rights movement, after changing the law to eliminate legalized racial discrimination, we should perhaps have broadened our goals. We would then have interpreted our struggle as one against *social* injustice rather than *racial* injustice. We would have fought not just for racially balanced schools but for better schools, not just for fair housing but for better housing.

By defining our battles on racial grounds, by focusing only on Blacks, we have let two things happen. We have let white America stay blind to the basic injustices of her system. After all, excuses can be found for the deprivation of the Blacks: one can say that Blacks are lazy and shiftless or, more charitably, that Blacks cannot catch up overnight. Thus one can continue to ignore the fact that there are white families that are hungry and white children who are denied a decent education, too. We have also, by restricting our struggle to racial grounds, deprived ourselves of the wider help we could have enlisted had the issues been presented in broader terms.

As we remind ourselves that we have no monopoly on suffering and that the victims of injustice come in all colors, we begin to learn that our problems as Blacks cannot be resolved in a vacuum. They cannot

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be resolved unless we attack the root disease itself, that of human injustice.

There are issues to utilize in this attack that already grip public attention. Whether we interpret our goals as strictly black, or in broader social terms, we can gain by joining in these issues.

The Peace Movement and Us

When Dr. Martin Luther King spoke out against the war in Vietnam, moans of dismay resounded through the civil rights movement. The movement had already passed its peak of hope and enthusiasm. We were encountering backlash in the white community, division in the black. And now Dr. King was courting further division and resistance, taking us down a diversionary road away from our one chief task. "I'm not going to sit by and see war escalated without saying anything about it..." he stated when our bombing of North Vietnam was stepped up in 1965. "The war in Vietnam must be stopped. There must be a negotiated settlement even with the Vietcong." He went on to suggest peace rallies just like SCLC's freedom rallies.

It cost him popularity and support. His Vietnam stand, not his civil rights leadership, was undoubtedly the reason why he dropped out of the top ten in the Gallup Poll's list of "most admired" persons in January 1967. But he did not remain silent. In 1967 he spoke with mounting passion, urging immediate and unilateral withdrawal. "The promises of the Great Society have been shot down on the battlefield of Vietnam.... We must combine the fervor of the civil rights movement with the peace movement. We must dem-

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onstrate, teach and preach until the very foundations of our nation are shaken," he said in Los Angeles. In New York he decried the "cruel irony" of black and white soldiers killing and dying together "for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools." He went on:

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and a brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam.

Leaders in the movement took him to task for opposing the war—Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, even that servant of peace Ralph Bunche—arguing that his stand was a disservice to the civil rights movement. I myself took this view. I remember that when the issue came up at the National Urban League convention in Philadelphia, I went along with the notion that concentration on the war would divert our efforts from the struggle for civil rights.

By now we have moved far beyond such a position. The war itself, not any stand that we might take on it, has hurt our movement and our people. History has forced us to see that it is an issue we cannot sidestep. Whitney Young spoke out strong and clear against the war in 1969, and many Blacks across the country agreed with him—at least philosophically. As this disastrous war has expanded, as we have seen it drain our resources, decimate our men, and rip our society apart,

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we have come to see that Dr. King was right. At least, as we see poverty funds diminish and military budgets swell, we *talk* with vigor of the need to "reorder national priorities." Yet most black Americans still stand apart from the peace movement. We remain essentially uninvolved—uninvolved in peace protest or draft resistance or anti-war lobbying. We have not been aroused to its urgency. And some in the peace movement wonder why.

The reasons for this are fairly obvious to Blacks. Although anti-war activists find this perhaps hard to credit, we as a broad community do not share their contempt for the military. In spite of its racially discriminatory practices, the army has traditionally been for us a place of opportunity: it has opened doors, provided training—simply afforded employment for that matter. I recall a cartoon depicting two GI's wading through the tropical brush. The black one says to his white buddy, "I'm the only one in my family with a job." It is not only a job, it is an escape. Who knows how many prefer risking their lives in the jungles of Vietnam to living in the hopeless, dead-end squalor and futility of the ghetto?

Not only an escape, but to many of us a taste of dignity. For although discrimination exists in the armed forces, the character of the life on the front—its temporariness, its uniformity, its life-and-death interdependency—makes possible a relationship with whites we do not find at home. The presence of death strips life to its basics. If your platoon leader is sharp, is good, you respect him and rely on him whatever his color. And here many Blacks experience for the first time

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trust and acceptance from whites, and true leadership roles. No, the military is no monster to most of us.

Black separatists, of course, have expressed opposition to the war. Malcolm X spoke out strongly as early as 1965. In general, the anti-war position of black radicals has been a question of ideology, a logical extension of their Third World view. Why should one colonized people be forced to fight another? Why should black men go off to kill yellow men? But this position, in general, simply condemns the war as an imperialistic white man's venture and does not go on to advocate actions for peace. Basically, it washes its hands of the war.

I have come to the conviction that we *cannot* wash our hands of it or hold aloof. I have come to believe that Dr. King was right: the issue of war and the issue of race are not separate, nor can they, in the broad picture, be dealt with separately. For the struggle we wage is not of race alone but of human justice, and we cannot solve the issue of race without dealing with the issue of justice. We cannot talk about defending human rights in Mississippi and remain silent about those we extinguish in Vietnam. We cannot fight for man's freedom in Georgia or Harlem or Watts and tacitly condone its destruction in Asia.

The issues of race and war are inseparable not merely because we suffer domestically from the diversion of national resources, but because they are manifestations of the same disease—America's evident belief that might makes right and that humanity is expendable.

They are inseparable not only because black boys die in those hills, far out of numerical proportion, but be-

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cause the death they deal before they die is the same that rots our homes and stunts our children here at home.

They are inseparable not only because of national priorities, of dollars that should go into our schools and housing, but because they are the expression of the very nature of our society, of the illness that debilitates it, extinguishing our hope.

In both the issue of peace and the issue of racial justice, we see the same paralysis of the national will: America's inability to stop even when she wants to. On a philosophical level, with felt sincerity, most Americans are for racial equality at home and for ending the war overseas—*but* only insofar as there is no price to pay. They are capable of great commiseration and even moral indignation, but sacrifice is unthinkable—just as defeat is unthinkable. Racial justice is a fine thing, a beautiful ideal, as long as one's own prerogatives and privileges remain intact. Peace is beautiful, too, but only if we can achieve it without losing face.

In both issues it is the withdrawal symptoms that America cannot bring herself to face. The pain of withdrawal, the cost in terms of national or personal position, looms larger than the human pain that is caused by the continuance of the act, whose victims presumably have grown accustomed to their anguish. When the voices of these victims manage to make themselves heard in their cries for justice and freedom, Americans nod in solemn, soulful agreement ("Yes, we want racial equality, too." "Yes, we want peace, too."), then lose themselves in endless debate as to how solutions can be achieved without cost. It does not occur to America

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that she can simply stop the war, or cease discrimination; she is convinced, with a quiet insanity, that she can stop only if she finds a way to do so without any compromise of power, privilege, or prestige.

Many Blacks, as we have seen, have declined to participate in the anti-war movement on the grounds that America's involvement in Southeast Asia is a white man's war. I too believe that it is essentially a white man's war, but I see that as no reason to stand idly by; for the peace we must win will be also the black man's peace. Our own survival demands that we make common cause with those who fight for this peace. It demands that we fight the common madness that will victimize us all. It is encouraging, therefore, that slowly but surely increasing numbers of Blacks today are beginning to recognize their own stake in the peace issue and their own imperative to act.

To a large extent the civil rights movement laid the groundwork for the anti-war movement. It called hundreds of whites out of the private comforts of their privileged lives. It offered them the challenge to give themselves to a moral issue, to test and taste their courage. It trained them and toughened them and taught them tactics. And all this fed into the peace movement.

On the other hand, the peace movement has helped many whites to better see the plight of the Black. America's war program and her resistance to their efforts to end it have revealed to many whites truths about our society and its institutions that had been veiled to them before. Hence some of their deep cynicism and revolt. These whites have come to see its greed, its hunger for power, its inhumanity to man, those dark forces in

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America that we Blacks have known well. And as we Blacks recognize our own imperative to work for peace, so perhaps will they bring their strength back into the struggle for racial justice. For history is teaching us all that the struggle is one and the same.

Playing the Environment Game

White America has been busy jumping on the environment bandwagon these days. Teach-ins, town meetings, rallies, an Earth Day, a plethora of books, reports, and organizations—all voice a sudden concern with what America's technology and her patterns of consumption are doing to the world we live in. Across the country in local communities and campuses Americans of all ages and persuasions, from garden-club ladies to college radicals, rally to the ecology banner. But the environmental movement has yet to enlist the Blacks.

To us this movement has had the smell of a con job. It has a suspiciously white, middle-class aura, it comes across as a gimmick, a plaything of the privileged. It does not move us—except to cynicism.

At the early stages, when the call was one of conservation, the plight of sequoia trees and doomed alligators hardly aroused concern on our part. So the wilderness was being ravaged... what did that matter to people caught in the concrete hell of the ghetto?

When the issue was broadened and America realized that her way of life threatened not only the whooping cranes with extinction but her own population, we Blacks still felt uninvolved. The word now was pollution. So there is smog, and so what else is new? We have been raised on it. A man needs a job before he

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can start worrying about clean air. And how much anguish can he spare for the sewage-filled rivers when he is not sure he can feed his own children?

Even when we did stop and try to listen to the talk of the environmentalists, its academic flavor made us impatient. Black Americans need no teach-ins to warn them of the wasteland our industrial society is producing; they live it, taste it, breathe it. The grim picture of the future which the ecologists paint is a present reality to too many of us: the unbreatheable air and deafening din, the treeless world of crowded humans, piling waste, and hunger. White Americans were not concerned about how this mess was killing poor Blacks until they saw it threatening to kill them, too. If white Americans let this happen to us, what meaning have their sudden sermons now? — their scholarly statistics simply irritated.

Though victimized more than whites by the environment, we have remained detached. Our knowledge of the causes feeds this detachment. For it is not we who have despoiled, not we who have raped the land, not our factories that belch poison into the air, not our tankers and drilling rigs that spill oil into the sea, not our families that over-consume, pillaging our resources and piling mountains of waste. That is the white man's doing: let him then bridle his greed, let him scurry for remedies. And so we have held aloof, not realizing the uses we could make of this issue.

What has galled us most, however, is a sense of something akin to betrayal. We have watched our white friends go from the civil rights movement to the peace issue. And now we see them reaching for still another

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cause, as a child with a short attention span soon reaches for another toy. We have seen this with bitterness mingled with contempt. Our cause was again getting lost. As Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, put it, the environmental issue has done what Alabama's George Wallace has not been able to do, namely "distract America's attention from the suffering of the black people and the poor people." Mayor Hatcher is hardly blind to the problems of the environment: his administration has been especially energetic in pushing for industry's compliance with Gary's pollution laws, but he echoes the sentiments of a black America that sees the ecology issue as a diversion from the nation's real crisis. And all the more so, I would add, because for all the talk of urban blight, most Americans still seem to see environmental needs as revolving around field and stream—middle-class, outer-city concerns.

Many Blacks, therefore, were highly cynical when Mrs. Lyndon Johnson launched her beautification program here in Washington. I was among the skeptics. That is, I was until I saw how Walter Washington, now our mayor, but then the director of the National Capital Housing Authority, guided much of this program and its resources into the neighborhoods of the inner-city. When I beheld the schoolyards and playgrounds that were fixed up, the community action it stimulated, the ancillary programs it primed, I began to change my thinking about its usefulness and relevance.

Of course, "beautification" is by definition very limited. But even in its superficiality it did make a dif-

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ference: it did beautify a little, make life a little more pleasant. After all, flowers in a ghetto neighborhood are flowers just the same. They may even have more meaning there than in the great outdoors, like bringing a living plant into a sick room or prison cell.

Yet the same cynicism that I had felt earlier about beautification cropped up again when President Nixon announced his intention to launch a broad environmental program. "Here we go again," I thought, "another upper-middle-class white program." I saw it as a kind of cop-out, an avoidance of the real gut issues of city life, a side-stepping of the ghetto's problems. I questioned the sincerity of the administration, thinking it a trick to turn public attention away from the war. And I questioned the sincerity of all those groups around the country who were going along with this gimmick and playing environmental games. The college young whose courage and seriousness I had admired when they dealt with the issue of the war now seemed engaged in childish rituals as they piled up heaps of aluminum cans and buried automobiles.

At this point, however, I decided to move beyond cynicism, at least to use it. "All right," I thought, "if environment is the name of the game, let's play it. Let's look at the environment right here, the real inner-city environment with its life and death concerns."

My staff and I at the Urban League began to pull together a series of papers designed to focus attention on these concerns and suggest a range of programs. Then I received a call from the White House. From the President's aides I learned that he shared our concern that the cause of environment be not narrowly

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construed, that it include the urban scene. I was asked to forward a set of program ideas to aid in planning environmental actions for the inner-city. This taught me that as an issue it provides us a broader base for action than most of us had assumed.

It is up to us to stretch the minds of those on the ecology bandwagon. To point out that urban environment is more than a question of soot, smoke, and smog; that it is also galloping physical deterioration in housing, streets, services. And that it is also, furthermore, the way people feel about these decaying neighborhoods, the climate of hopelessness and alienation. We must therefore insist that programs include both a visible attack on the physical environment and a campaign against apathy and despair. The latter can be combated only where residents feel they have a stake in their environment. So all such proposals should be concerned to stimulate local initiative and local skills and should promote a solid degree of local control.

In terms of physical environment we point to the public housing projects with their rats and roaches, their dark, garbage-littered hallways, their peeling plaster and broken windows. We point to the vacant lots strewn with verminous refuse, glass, and rusting junk—lots that could be transformed into vest-pocket parks and playgrounds. We point also to the private housing where, among all the ills of dilapidation, there is the deadly threat of lead poisoning. Where old paint peels, more ancient layers are exposed, layers applied in those days when the interior use of lead paint was not illegal. And when these underlayers flake, home and food are permeated. The paint chips off splinter-

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ing windowsills where little children rest their chins; gazing out at the street they pick at it, eat it. And those dull eyes will become duller, for it is an insidious poison, stunting the mind.

It is both encouraging and appalling that this danger is totally preventable. But the America that shudders in alarm over the effects of pesticides on robins and bald eagles has chosen to ignore this problem that maims, retards, and sometimes kills, thousands of our children. In poor housing one child out of thirteen will become poisoned, with the chance of permanent brain damage. Doctors now tell us that if a child eats a flake of leaded paint the size of a pea or a cigarette ash for thirty days—he will die. All right, we say, if America wants to talk environment, let's talk environment. Let's not let her off the hook. Let's give her some teach-ins of our own.

And since our inner-city environment is not just streets and buildings, but also the climate of futility, we must build into environmental proposals and actions the engagement of our youth, the employment of our jobless. Let us then upgrade lives while upgrading structures. The renovation of public and private housing can be undertaken in a way to provide both skills and remuneration. The dropouts and the unemployed can receive on-the-job training in carpentry, painting, plastering, glazing, and other repair work. Black contractors can be engaged. Ghetto youths can be organized in the fight against lead paint poisoning also. As in the project called SOUL in Chicago, they have shown that they can make surveys, collect samples, bring children to neighborhood health centers for test-

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ing. They can not only perform these functions but find in them new pride and purpose. They can find the involvement and solidarity that makes a community come alive, that makes an environment one's own.

The possibilities are endless.

So now, after starting out as one of the cynics, I find myself a little impatient with those of us who continue to shrug off this issue. For instead of standing aside from the game, we can play it. Instead of boycotting meetings and rallies, we can get up on the podium and tell America what environment is. She is not asleep, her attention is awakened—let us now direct it toward our own needs. Let us with emphatic insistence bring into the dialogue on environment the plight of our brothers. Let us not allow the bleeding hearts to go off on their middle-class white protests, their academic exercises, without making them see the filth of our rotting ghettos. If they talk air pollution, let's tell them that it is highest of all in black areas. Our tuberculosis rate is four times that of whites.

Although we are still very far from recognizing the potential here, there are some cases where Blacks are showing concretely what can be done with this issue.

In East St. Louis a group that calls itself Black Survival is working to redirect the attention of the white environmentalists, and in so doing also awaken the awareness of the Blacks. One way they do it is with a series of dramatic skits that tell the story of ghetto environment and its destruction of life in stark terms—more compelling and immediate than any report or speech or compilation of statistics. Another way is through exploring precisely the physical impact of this

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environment on its victims: in spite of America's current interest, there is very little information on what pollution is doing to urban Blacks. Working with white middle-class groups, Black Survival has enlisted the resources of local universities to determine the effect of chemical fumes on inner-city residents. They have determined, for example, that local Blacks show twice as many traces of DDT as the city's whites, a result presumably of the frequency with which vermin-infected ghetto housing has to be sprayed. They add their weight to the protest of local citizens against the big industrial polluters, the city's chemical companies — and then they use this protest to make an additional demand: the commitment of these industries to hire more Blacks.

A venture in Chicago shows us that the environmental issue can be used to build black business. The problem of waste disposal and the problem of deforestation are active concerns to the ecologists: recycling old newspapers is an attack on both. It eliminates waste; it saves trees. So with the help of suburban conservationists and local business, the West Side Paper Stock Corporation was launched, the first joint venture of five local black groups including former rivals like the Conservative Vice Lords and the Egyptian Cobra Nation. In city and suburb they place large collection boxes which are picked up each week. Each filled box, they point out, saves 187 trees and 1,060 cubic feet of landfill. It also provides jobs to the ghetto and training in accounting and management skills.

Such a project rallies support from elements who have been very far removed, politically and socially,

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from the concerns of the poor and the Black. As has been one of the themes of this book, we can learn increasingly to use these ad hoc alliances on specific projects. When "environment" becomes the problem of bridges and freeways, it can trigger coalitions over a very broad spectrum, as the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis (ECTC) here in Washington illustrates. Many are ready now to join us in resisting arbitrary usurpation of land for transportation corridors. For Blacks, of course, this problem is incomparably more urgent, almost one of survival: "No more white men's roads through black men's homes," as the ECTC says. But their ranks are strengthened as they are joined in their battle by ecology activists from local universities and by the city's upper-crust patricians, who see their homes and gardens threatened. So we behold U-Street Blacks learning to work in alliance with poodle-walking ladies from fashionable neighborhoods and the hirsute hippie youth of Georgetown. The house and garden ladies, I dare say, were not very worried about black homes before, but I suspect that because of this experience many of them are now. In such coalitions that cut across the classes and across the politics, from rock-ribbed conservative to wild-eyed radical, we can rally resources for our battles. And the issue of environment is clearly one that provides a broad base for doing so.

At Earth Day in Washington the political commentator I. F. Stone said that the environmental issue was "a beautiful snow job. The country is slipping into a wider war in Southeast Asia, and we're talking about litterbugs.... The divisions of white and black in this

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country are getting to the point where they threaten our future, and we're talking about pollution."

I cannot fault his sentiments: in a sense it is a snow job. We Blacks always knew it. Yet, if it provides us a lens through which we can focus America's attention on our problems, if it enables us to achieve even some limited tasks, then we can use it and we should.

And we can do more than that. The real danger of this movement is that it can become trivial and that if it becomes trivial it can multiply our woes. If in encountering the resistant power of the status quo it settles for cosmetic changes rather than the political, social, institutional changes that are necessary, then it will be worse than meaningless. If it settles for solutions that pass on to the consumer the costs of cleaning up pollution, then it will be the poor who are hit the hardest. The poor will pay for the conscience of the rich. If it attempts, as it preaches, to curb economic growth without striving simultaneously for a guaranteed annual income, then the poor will pay doubly. If it launches governmental programs of environmental control without reducing military expenditures, then poverty, schooling, welfare, health budgets will suffer — and the poor will pay triply.

As George Wiley, director of the National Welfare Rights Organization, pointed out to ecology enthusiasts at Harvard:

If you are not prepared to say that we want to put a priority on dealing with urban environmental problems; if you are not prepared to put yourselves and your movement and your organization on the line for

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those things — quite clearly poor people will pay the cost of your ecology program.

If the environmental movement is not to run this dangerous course, it is up to us to speak out.

"I'm too tied up in being black to give a damn about the environment," said a Michigan student this spring. Yes, I reply, but being black means caring for your black brothers and for the world they live in. And if you care, and if you want to do something, you need tools. You need something to work with. The ecology movement is not panacea, it has not offered even partial or short-term solutions. But what it can offer us are some tools, some leverage, a little help from the broader society.

The Black Man and Crime

We Blacks have been so silent on the subject of crime that one would think that only white society was affected. While crime rates have soared, showing a hundred per cent increase in the last decade, and polls reveal that the majority of Americans now consider crime the number one national problem, we have been reticent, reluctant to speak out, slow to take action. Yet we know, each of us, how dark a shadow it casts over our lives.

Each of us lives in this shadow, each is a victim. You may not have been accosted yourself, held up in a dark alley or robbed of your purse as you walked down the street. You may not yourself have felt a gun in your back or found your home broken into, belongings stolen that you had saved to buy. But you are nonetheless a victim.

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You are victimized by the fear that is perhaps the highest cost of crime. It is the fear that keeps you home at night when you would like to go out for an evening stroll or a visit to friends. It is the fear that catches you when you simply hear footsteps behind you on a dark street or when you see someone waiting up ahead in a doorway. It is the fear that makes you hurry, and keeps you wondering if you double-locked your door. Many are the irreparable injuries inflicted by crime—to the victim and to the offender himself—but one of the very worst is what it is doing to the way we live with each other.

We know it well here in Washington. Our city ranks among the highest in crime in the nation. Moreover, our rate of increase is over double the national average. In the first nine months of last year, reported crime jumped 26 per cent over the previous year, compared to a national average of 11 per cent. Cleveland, San Francisco, Baltimore, also topped the national average. Like many cities our downtown areas are now almost deserted at night. Restaurants and theaters are closing for lack of clientele, while in this bleak vacuum another kind of business spreads—the rackets and prostitution and dope rings of organized crime. We fear for ourselves and we fear for our children and our women. We see the security, the dignity, and the freedom we have struggled for, the lives we have sought to build, eaten away by this spreading lawlessness.

We do not need statistics to tell us who is involved in the crimes of violence. We know that the majority of the perpetrators come from the social levels of the

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poor and the disadvantaged. The rich whites in the suburbs are engaged in crime too, more and more in fact, but for an over-all record of larceny, burglary, and assault they do not match our brothers in the ghetto.

Similarly we know who the main victims are. They are not the voices who cry the loudest in this country for law and order; they are not the ones buying the police dogs and the burglar alarms in their suburban fortresses. No, the main victims are, far and away, the poor and the black.

Yet statistics still come as a shock. The President's 1967 Commission on Law Enforcement revealed that if your income is under \$3,000 your chance of being robbed is five times higher than if your income is over \$10,000; your chance of being raped is four times as high; of suffering burglary, almost twice as high. The statistics also reveal that if you are black, the odds that you will be robbed are more than triple those if you are white, the odds you will know burglary and car theft are almost double. So if you are poor *and* black in this beautiful land of ours, you begin to know what crime really means.

We know that at the root of crime are the desperate conditions of the ghetto: the inadequate, overcrowded, ill-equipped schools; the unbearable, dilapidated, overcrowded housing; the unemployment; the broken families; all the vicious forces that push the poor, urban Black outside of society. And it is no wonder then, say the sociologists and the reformers, no wonder then that he *acts* as if he were outside that society, acts out that alienation in crime.

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While I am deeply disturbed about the conditions that have perpetuated the ghetto and foster crime, there is something else that disturbs me. It is the failure of black leadership to speak out against crime itself. I do not hear their voices raised against the robbery and burglary and rape that is perpetuated on our people, against the gun-toting that turns our streets into alleys of fear. The statistics soar, but they maintain an aloof silence. And this silence most damages the black community itself.

Now it is easy to understand why there has been this silence. There are many reasons. We black leaders have been directing our attention to society's crimes against our people—and quite rightly so. We have been crying out against the tragic injustices of our system, against the racist practices of white institutions that have kept our people so long in poverty and despair. We have focused on police behavior. We have told the story of police brutality and bigotry, documenting it and bringing it out into the open. We have fought for changes in the police departments, the establishment of civilian review boards and the hiring of more black patrolmen. Such reforms are essential, but unfortunately the fight for them has diverted our attention from the matter of crime itself.

In speaking out against crime we have also been inhibited by the attitudes of white America. We are deeply suspicious of its call for "law and order." We are embittered by its tendency to equate crime with blackness. Perhaps because its awareness of rising crime rates coincided with black power rhetoric and the ghetto riots, the white majority lumped them all to-

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gether. It shuddered at the nightmare vision of waves of marauding Blacks spilling out of the ghetto to pillage the land. Crime and the black man became synonymous to many. Our resentment of this made it hard to talk about crime, but by our silence we contributed indirectly to the impression that all Blacks are potential criminals and all whites are their victims.

Our silence further hurts our black brothers because it encourages certain assumptions that are degrading and dangerous. It tends to foster the assumption, for example, that crime is *only* a function of poverty and injustice. It would seem to justify the crime rate in terms of the cost of living. Bleeding hearts, both black and white, say in so many words, "You steal because you're poor. You are not responsible for your poverty, therefore you are not really responsible for your crime."

Now this attitude is highly injurious, not only to society, but most particularly to the recipient of all this commiseration and sympathy, the black man himself. It is degrading and it is false. For those who steal are not those who are trying to meet the monthly rent bill and the gas bill and all the other bills, and struggling to feed and clothe their children. The men and women who are really fighting the cost of living are not those who lurk in our streets and alleys with pistols in their belts. We know this.

I think of the working mother who is up before dawn to get out to the suburbs to do another woman's housework and then returns after a hard day's work to do her own, to cook for her children and stay up late into the night washing and ironing their clothes.

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If you want to know about poverty, about the grueling daily effort to make ends meet, ask her—not the hold-up artist. It is degrading to her, to her struggle and to her courage and dignity, to condone the assumption that poverty justifies crime. As statistics show, she is, far more often than not, their victim.

The burden of being black in this society is bad enough. The burden of being black *and* poor is worse. What we certainly do not need is the additional burden of being told, "You steal because you're poor"; nor do we need to tacitly support the assumption that we are not morally responsible. We must not let society hang this on us as well. We do not need this erosion of our dignity.

Crime is not "black" or "white." Crime is crime—and it is devouring us. Just as we have wanted to be protected from the arbitrary brutality of the police, so we must insist on protection from the criminal. We rightfully resent white America's policy of containment when it comes to crime. She has made it clear that it matters less when restricted to black turf. As we have noted earlier, the police respond more slowly to emergencies in the ghetto and look the other way too often when rackets and dope rings dig in and flourish there. We have done our part in this, too, out of rebellion against white society and out of loyalty to anyone whose skin is black. The black criminal feels that he can escape to the black community: "My brothers will protect me from the cops because they don't like whitey." And out of a twisted, self-defeating sense of justice, we provide a haven for him.

White society has let crime happen in the ghetto

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for so long that it has almost become a part of its culture. It not only exists there, it thrives. The criminals are not just present, they are nourished there, like parasites. So while we are busy shaking our fist at whitey across the railroad tracks and across the free-ways, our furniture is being hauled out our front door. While we are busy marching to City Hall and getting the white power to sit down and listen to us, our television sets are on the way to the pawn shop, our women are being raped and beaten, our children becoming drug addicts. And we continue to say that it is the fault of society. It is. But it is more than that, for while there are the sins of society, there is also the responsibility of the individual. And it is our responsibility as individuals now to see to our safety and survival.

The types of action we must put on our agendas are many. They will not enable us to stamp out crime, for as long as our grievous economic and social needs go unmet, the crime will continue to take its toll on life and property. However, we can lessen this toll by pressing for penal reform, by joining our efforts to those who are calling for gun registration, by mobilizing allies in a crack-down on the organized crime that pushes drugs on our youth. Of the many actions we should undertake, and indeed cannot shirk from, let me dwell briefly on two. They represent critical needs and promise a broad beneficial effect in the fight against crime in our communities: court reform and joint police citizen programs.

Of all reported major offenses it is estimated that only 12 per cent lead to arrests, only 6 per cent to con-

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viction and 1 per cent to prison. Of those arrested here in Washington it takes an average of nine months for a criminal case to go to trial; some wait up to twenty. During those long months the victim may wearily drop his charges or, if he does not, witnesses may forget, move away, disappear. Also during those long months over a third of those arrested for armed robbery commit another crime while they are out on bail. The solution to this does not lie in preventive detention, which has been passed into law here. Rather it lies in the judiciary reform that would enable our courts to deliver speedy justice.

That may not sound like "civil rights," but we Blacks must join with those who fight for these reforms. We must unclog our antiquated courts so that the guilty can be brought to trial without delay and the innocent exonerated without suffering. We must lobby, petition, protest, preach, and get "up in arms" until the machinery of justice is made workable and more judges made available to us. "Not a black man's issue," you say? "Let whitey do the work"? No, we Blacks are suffering too much from crime gone unchecked. This is our problem as much as the white man's, for if he is more to blame, it is we who suffer most from it.

Last February here in Washington witnessed a unique phenomenon: throughout all the neighborhoods of the broad third police district, a predominantly black, high-crime area, an election was being held—election to the Precinct Citizens Board. The candidates were many, voter turn-out was high, and a widely representative group of citizens was elected as part of the Pilot Precinct Project. Funded by OEO this is

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only, perforce, a short-term experiment, but the imaginative measures the board is undertaking, coupled with the responsiveness of the community and the cooperation of the police under Chief Jerry Wilson, have much to teach us. The board constitutes citizen involvement, not control, but it represents public opinion organized behind it.

If the police are to protect us from crime (and there is no one else paid to do the job), two things are required: a relationship of trust and respect with us; and a measure of freedom from the noncriminal kinds of duties which occupy a high proportion of their time. The citizens board gives promise of making both possible.

Not only is the board in itself a channel of communication between police and community, it has undertaken specific programs to build understanding. Obligatory in-service training for patrolmen now includes instruction in the law which the officers should represent, protect, and abide by, including the First Amendment. It also includes teaching the patrolmen about the culture, history, and life-styles of the precinct people, and sensitivity sessions in which they can confront and explore their own attitudes. This training can help the policeman to see how his own behavior can trigger problems for him, and to see that the good cop, the effective cop, is the one who is trusted by the community.

A program of scout car riders, in which as many citizens as possible are given a chance to accompany a policeman, provides a comparable experience from the other direction. The community resident learns first-

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hand the daily problems the officer faces, gets a glimpse of his job and of his perspective on the community. In informal conversation stereotypes begin to break down. All this, of course, is no mere exercise in "public relations": it is practical, to the point, and of the utmost importance. Whatever our biases we must learn to work with the police and they with us if we want to make our communities worth living in.

There are many ways, as the precinct citizens board has shown, in which the policeman can be freed from the routine or social-work tasks that so drastically reduce the hours he can be on the street. Civilians employed in police stations can take over many clinical and referral functions. Emergency service centers, manned by citizens, can help the public with the many problems of a noncriminal nature that take police time and attention, such as family quarrels, medical crises, and landlord-tenant disputes.

Aiming both to interest boys and young men in a police career and to provide public safety functions, the Junior Police Cadet Corps and Courtesy Patrol, which the pilot project has launched, is a promising program. Youth from junior high school age to twenty-one are recruited full- or part-time, and given training extending from first aid to instruction in community resources. The broad help they can give both police and community includes evening escort service, school patrolling, and security checks of streets, stores, and homes.

I believe very strongly that there is an important and direct role which the community can play in policing itself, and that we have in our youth untapped re-

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sources for this function. Given a job to do, a purpose, a sense of being needed, they could bring a real measure of safety back to our streets, if we could but come up with the programs. Much exploration and experimentation lies ahead of us here, for the practice is new and essentially untried; but I am convinced that we must push forward in this direction in all our cities.

White America may care less for our safety than for her own, but that is no reason for us to let fear walk our streets. If her policy seems one of containing crime within the ghetto, then let us not accept that slow form of genocide. We do not need government handouts and government experts to tell us how to protect our women and children. Certainly we need funds if we are going to mount broad programs, but we will not win them until we are determined to fight for our own safety and survival. We can take a leaf from the story of the Black Muslims. Their work with the most hardened criminals and dope addicts, their reclamation of them from the degradation and hopelessness of the cell block, can teach us again what pride means.

I have talked a good deal about pride—pride in our blackness, in our beauty, in our culture and style. But we have conquered shame and self-hatred only part way. The job is only half done. There are other burdens coming out of the past, inflicted by society, that we have to cast off. We must move on to work for the physical and emotional health of our communities. It is not enough to see that schools are open to us, we must keep our children in them. It is not sufficient to desegregate jobs, our youth must be strong enough and clearheaded enough to work. It is not sufficient to win

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equal wages, we must fight for equal protection for the homes and families we support. We have been victimized by crime long enough—and just yelling at the white man is not going to help. Sure, he is basically at fault, but he is not our great white father. We do not need him to tell us what to do. We know what we have to do—get ourselves straight. Straight and strong for the long haul.

7

Getting It Together**Feeling Powerless**

It is four years now, as I write this, since the call for black power first rang out. We remember the lift it gave us, the sense of pride we found in its assertion of our black identity and our black defiance. As Blacks we would rally together, build a strong base, not pleading for our rights but demanding them with militant anger. We knew that white resentment would increase; that was the price of anger—but a small price to pay for the purposefulness we felt and for the power we would build.

That seems a long time ago—not because so much has happened since then, but because so little has happened. For much of black America life seems suspended. In the bleakness and filth of the inner-cities our people go through the motions of living. On the street corners jobless men still wait; among the garbage and rats their children still play. There are some new features to the scene. City blocks are ravaged by the riots; the burnt and boarded buildings, the empty lots, still

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stand — like silent witnesses to their futile anger. Streets that used to be alive at night are now silent corridors, dark and fear-ridden. The families that once thronged them, enjoying the stores and the bars and the lights, the arguments and the laughter, sit now behind double- and triple-locked doors.

The anger that resounded in the call for black power now feeds a sense of no-power. Everywhere this feeling of impotence is evident. Our youth seek escape from their dead-end world. Drug addiction rises as they trade their health for momentary release, as they barter their future for a brief sense of well-being.

The rage that had erupted in the large-scale riots turns inward. A black man in Houston spoke of his community's fear of police brutality:

There is no doubt in anybody's mind that if there is a riot in this town, these police will kill a lot of black people. It keeps down riots, but, you know, the inward rage here is very great among black people. Every weekend night, you hear of Blacks killing Blacks. Everybody has a gun, too.

The angry powerlessness that expresses itself in attacks upon one's own brothers finds other outlets too. The incidence of arson in the ghetto has risen dramatically. Such fires range from small trash blazes to multi-alarm affairs that destroy whole blocks. In Washington, New York, and Los Angeles, fire department spokesmen estimate that cases of suspected arson last year were four times the 1960 levels, and state that the problem is growing. Some officials see arson emerging as a form of general social protest; they say that while it is less spectacular than the Watts or Detroit-style riot

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it has the same roots. Other experts explain ghetto arson in psychological terms, stating that it springs from an individual's feelings of impotence and his desire to demonstrate power.

The sense of powerlessness that leads the faceless ones to arson, drugs, and feuds is echoed up and down the political and social ladder among those who seek to organize and implement urban programs. They see tools for change ripped from their hands as funds for these programs are cut. Mayor Stokes of Cleveland pointed out recently that money once allocated by the Office of Economic Opportunity for two months of summer job programs is being spread over all twelve months of the year. "And this," he said, "at a time when you can't even talk about forces that might tear our society apart. It's here, it's happening."

The forces that might tear our society apart are making themselves felt. Seattle's Mayor Uhlman said this summer, "I can hold my community together for another two years, I can keep people talking to each other and trying things. We can do it, but just for two more years."

These tensions are exacerbated by the specter of an economic recession. Buildings are being constructed, factories erected, jobs provided—but only in the suburbs. Some Blacks are moving to the suburbs, too, but they are the skilled, the middle class, the professionals. In our cities economic blight spreads. Among the poor and the unskilled and semiskilled who are caught in these cities, a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness spreads with it.

This feeling of impotence, which makes the very

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words "black power" sound derisive, is real. But it is not the end of the road and it is not, at this time in our history, warranted. For we are stronger than we think. In our numbers are potentials for leverage we can use. In our growing experience are reservoirs of strength we can tap. In both are genuine prospects for power, power to use the system and to effect change.

A New Kind of Leadership

The real changes we want seem painfully distant. Yet, something is happening. It is only a beginning, but it points the way to the building of real power.

I look at what has been happening on the local scene in the last couple of years. In church basements and school halls, night after night, local citizens meet, making proposals for the rebuilding of their riot-torn neighborhood. With the help of foundation and government funds they have hired their own planners and architects. They express their wants, clarify their needs, work out their conflicts, and determine their priorities. As they organize not just to protest but to plan, their own leadership develops. This pattern is repeated across the country as citizens participate in Model Cities programs and residents are elected from each neighborhood to sit on the Model Cities board. I have seen here in Washington how such local leadership is forcing new planning concepts upon the Redevelopment Land Agency and the National Capital Planning Commission and opening the eyes of city administrators to the grassroots needs.

Parents organize to confront the school system with its failures and their children's needs. As they work for

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school decentralization they themselves assume leadership roles. Families, to free themselves from the low-quality, high-cost food chain stores in the ghetto, organize to establish cooperative food-buying schemes. Youth gangs organize to go "conservative." Ceasing their gang warfare, they apply their energies to self-help and community projects ranging from laundromats and automobile repair shops to remedial reading classes. Sanitation workers, as they have here in Washington this summer, push through their demands in a solid display of organized unity. Welfare mothers organize: in all fifty states they are working to secure without humiliation their full legal benefits and an adequate income. Here in Washington this summer they wrested \$200,000 for furniture from private and government sources in the District of Columbia. They had been told that the funds were not available and that was the case; but so strong was their pressure that normal compartmentalized bureaucratic procedures simply had to give way.

Deliberately I repeat the word "organize," because that is the key to the new breed of leadership now emerging. Out of the impatience of the local community, and out of its internal conflicts as well, this indigenous leadership develops. Its determination is fed by the realization that the white man is not going to do the job that must be done. The effectiveness of this new leadership is enhanced by a capacity to negotiate as it learns that nonnegotiable demands lead to non-realizable gains. Where once noble principle and rhetoric stood in the way of practical change, and the

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image of the leader obstructed progress for the people, the arts of collective bargaining are being practiced.

Lest I present too rosy a picture, let me say that the development of local leadership is still hampered by dissension; we are still far from the millennium in this respect. We are weakened by our distrust and jealousies of each other, by our factionalism and feuding. The late Kelly Miller, a black civic leader, said that the black community was like a barrel of crabs. You do not need to put a lid on a basket of crabs, because you can be sure they won't get loose. Each time a crab starts over the edge the others will pull him back. Each time a black leader asserts his strength, rival forces emerge to challenge him and undercut local support.

One can argue that rivalry is not unique to blacks—whites do not cooperate easily either. But that is not the point. For assured of their place in the sun, whites do not need unity and mutual support as much as we. That is why we have needed black united fronts and broad community coalitions. Once we have a strong disciplined organization, rivalry can be productive, it can release energy and fire the drive to excel. Our basic unity of purpose, then, is not an idealistic matter, but an urgent practical need.

But while we still vie with each other for commanding roles, our struggles for power are now concerned with specific problems in a given issue. The new breed of leader is ready to concentrate his efforts. He is willing to be a big fish in a little pond. He is concerned that the water not be polluted in that small pond, and he has the patience to listen and talk with the people.

In the past the organization that has traditionally

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predominated in the black community has been social — church guilds, sororities, men's clubs aimed at providing fellowship and good times. While still active, even these clubs now justify their existence with do-good projects. For the black community has become issue-oriented. Where once it left action on issues to the "leaders" on top, be they black or white, it is now seizing responsibility itself. In consequence "The Negro Leader" of the community, the ceremonial spokesman, is replaced by a proliferation of local grassroots leaders focused on separate causes and supported by genuine followerships. Where before there would not have been a chance for a neighborhood-level organization to get much attention or exert much influence, such organizations can now affect City Hall. The storefront leader whose name may not be known downtown has his say now in what housing comes up or goes down in his block. The better-known black spokesman of his city must check with him now and cultivate his support. Something is at work that could be called democracy, and it is forcing relevance, responsiveness, and a greater measure of integrity on the higher-level black leadership.

The days of the ceremonial black leader are past. Hand-picked by the downtown establishment, he was tied to that establishment and could be, when the chips were down, neither truly responsible nor responsive to the black people. He had not the freedom or the base to initiate or implement change. His role rather was to fit his people into the establishment's schedule for change. He could not push or holler, his job was to be a palliative, not an advocate. Adam Clayton Powell was

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defeated because he had come to function as though he were a ceremonial leader. He did not lose the election because Congress had scolded him for his alleged misdeeds, but because he no longer took care of his people. Where previously he had provided services to his district, he was content to become a symbolic figure. That is no longer enough to today's black community. The ceremonial leaders are being disposed of uncere-
moniously.

The black community is demanding relevance. Even when their politicians do not emerge directly from that community, they must hearken to it. They must listen to the tune it calls and sense its rhythm. The black population of Massachusetts is not large, and Senator Edward Brooke is a representative of all the people of the state, but his authenticity as a leader, in the eyes of both Blacks and whites, has its roots in his relevance to the black community. No matter how light his skin, how wavy his hair, how polished his diction, his roots are there. When disturbances break out among the Blacks of New Bedford, he is there on the spot—for, though he serves the causes of the people of the entire state, his moral and political authority derives in large measure from his responsiveness to the Blacks.

We see, then, a leadership emerging that is of the people. Schooled in the grassroots problems of the community, it is receptive and responsive to the people's needs. It is authentic. No longer puppets of the establishment or creations of the white media, these men and women enter the political arena with the wind at their back. The whites sense this, the Blacks know it. Demanding relevance of their leaders, the

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black community keeps their feet to the fire. As long as this relevance is real, these leaders have a new authority and a new freedom to act.

One of the challenges facing us is to summon a similar measure of responsiveness from those Blacks in government who are not elected. We have fought long and hard to get Blacks into the middle and upper levels of the civil service. Too often we find that they have become sophisticated yes-men to their institutions. The community will find ways to reach these brothers, as it makes new demands for black responsibility.

Before his Newark election Mayor Kenneth Gibson said rightly, "The community... will not accept some puppet candidate put up by outsiders.... Today black people select their own leaders and their own political candidates and they won't be happy about other groups trying to put up puppets, carpetbaggers and Uncle Toms."

Here is our strength: in this new leadership and in the numbers that we must now bring to their support. Whitney Young said, in speaking of the roads that are open to us:

There is economic power, which can be mobilized to reward one's friends and punish one's enemies. There is brain power, where one can, through sheer competence, move into strategic places in the Establishment and from that vantage point have an influence on policy. And there is political power. Economic and brain power are both the best long-range instruments. The political can be mobilized immediately, and therein lies the hope for rapid change.

With our numbers and our emerging leadership we

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can still avail ourselves of the political machinery of the system. We can put our hands to the levers of power, but only if we attain a measure of unity among ourselves and employ flexibility in our political strategies.

The Political Challenge

The idea of working through the political system to achieve real change strikes a cynical note among many young Blacks. Numbers of our most sensitive, militant young people feel that this way is too long and too slow for the urgency of our needs, and in the end unproductive. As they look at our national political parties they see that neither addresses itself to our needs. The Democrats take Blacks for granted: assuming we have nowhere else to go they can forget us. The Republicans have clearly decided that our potential support is expendable. The political scene on the city, county, and state level is hardly more encouraging. Here the political machinery seems even more entrenched in the status quo. Racial antagonisms reveal themselves more nakedly. Among local party hacks an appetite for reform, a vision of a new future are very slow in coming.

With such a diagnosis I have no argument. The political avenue to social change is not an easy one for Blacks. My only answer simply is this: If it is access to power we want, we have no viable alternative. The voting booth is still there, elections are still held on schedule, and the ballot is still private. We must organize ourselves to use them, and we are showing that we can.

Leroi Jones, as he set out to organize the campaign

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that resulted two years later in Kenneth Gibson's election as mayor of Newark, had this to say:

I'm in favor of black people taking power by the quickest, easiest, most successful means they can employ. Malcolm X said the ballot or the bullet. Newark is a particular situation where the ballot seems to be advantageous. I believe we have to survive. I didn't invent the white man. What we are trying to do is deal with him in the best way we can. . . . Black men are not murderers. . . . What we don't want to be is die-ers.

Newark is not the only place where the ballot is more "advantageous" than the bullet. As we have seen earlier in this book, the time for threats at gunpoint is past; such dramatics can only hurt us now. The political road to freedom is long and tortuous, but at least it is there, it is open. An elected black official has the power of his office behind him, the might of the system; he cannot be threatened or silenced, he can work for his people with a freedom no guerilla leader or "revolutionary" could attain.

Samuel Lubell, the public opinion analyst, has written of the salutary effects of Carl Stokes' election upon the Blacks of Cleveland, of "the remarkable lift in morale and in actual benefits." He quotes local Blacks talking buoyantly of "all the different kinds of jobs that have been opened up to us," of how they "never saw a snowplow on our street before Stokes became mayor," of how "the police aren't so nasty as they used to be," of how "we feel part of Cleveland now." *That* is liberation: not beating our heads against the wall, yelling and screaming and waiting for someone to

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hand us our freedom, but liberating ourselves through the machinery that has been available primarily to white America and which is now available to us if we would use it.

Through the political system we can move massively into the mainstream of America — not just to be part of the mainstream, for much of it is polluted and often flows in the wrong direction, but to clean it up and make it answer our needs. Movement into that mainstream is the fastest, most efficient way, the only acceptable and only workable way, of changing its course. We have now more registered voters than ever before, we have an awakened, impatient community and a growing authentic grassroots leadership.

Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, one of our most sensitive and sensible social scientists, who happens to be black, spoke recently of the futile cycle of black agitation, white backlash, and black reaction. He sees black advancement through the election of black public officials as the only way to break that cycle:

Social implementation in a democracy is politics and the agents of implementation are public officials. Elected Negro officials are now the only civil rights leaders who are representative of the aspirations, desires, and the quest for answers posed by their constituents and elected by their people to speak for them.... The time is past when self-appointed individual leaders — however genuine their commitment — can speak for the masses of American Negroes.

To use with effectiveness the political machinery available to us we must make a cool appraisal of our strength. We need to study the relative power of our

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numbers so that we do not court defeat and frustrate ourselves through unrealistic expectations, and so that we can devise appropriate political strategies.

Coloring all of our political action is the fact that we are a minority. We are approximately 11 per cent of the United States' population, a percentage that has remained about the same since 1900. Our distribution, however, is lopsided — over half of us are concentrated in the inner-cities. Among our major cities we comprise a majority here in Washington, while in Newark, Baltimore, and Detroit we approach the half-way mark, as well as in Memphis, Atlanta, and New Orleans in the South. It has been assumed that our numerical superiority in the large cities would increase. The Kerner Commission warned that the United States was rapidly becoming two nations with the Blacks segregated in the inner-cities and the whites encamped about them. Recent evidence, however, shows a startling increase in Blacks moving to the inner-suburbs (their annual percentage from 1960 to 1966 was 0.7 per cent; from 1966-68 this had swelled to 8 per cent). Whether this migration represents a raise in living standards or simply an expansion of the ghetto into adjacent areas, the fact remains that Blacks have crossed electoral boundaries and weakened their political clout in the cities. Therefore, if we are to control the cities, coalitions with sections of the white majority within them are essential.

These whites, our cohabitants of the central cities, are among those whose racial antagonisms are becoming more explicit. Political pundits see a trend in which race is emerging as a major issue in the politics of our major cities. It threatens the Democratic coali-

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tion that has prevailed in our big cities since the Depression.

While we are heartened, therefore, by some recent gains in elections, we are not jubilant. It is a cause for pride and an unmistakable sign of progress that we have 1,469 elected black officials now, including 168 state legislators, 48 mayors, and 10 members of Congress. But we know that these numbers are hardly representative of our proportionate strength, and that the shifts of public sentiment, the trend toward polarization, will hardly contribute to make any of our elections a shoo-in.

Two conclusions emerge from even so brief a survey as this. If we are to use the political machinery to our advantage and put Blacks in public office, black unity in campaign organizations and in voting is essential. It is essential, but it is not enough. Black unity alone will not win elections, nor can a candidate run on his blackness alone. His appeal must be broader, it must involve issues of key importance to the white majority. Although these two requirements are hard to balance, they are not contradictory.

Campaign Discipline

A year ago it seemed unlikely, even to ardent liberals, that Newark would elect itself a black mayor as early as 1970. Since the Blacks were not an absolute majority, a black candidate would need both the unified support of the black community and about 10 per cent of the white votes as well. It was highly questionable whether either of these could be achieved. Although besieged by the nearly insoluble financial and

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administrative problems that beset our major cities, from the shrinking job market to the middle-class suburban shift, Newark is an important transportation and industrial center. It seemed improbable that the urban whites, heavily Italian and Irish, would allow Blacks to run the municipal government. Furthermore, one wondered whether a widely varied black community, with our endemic tendency toward divisiveness, could muster the unity and self-discipline that were essential.

Kenneth Gibson was elected the first black mayor of a major Eastern city not because these difficulties had been overestimated, but because they had been realistically faced.

In the weeks following the 1967 riot, the goal was set: an administration for Newark that was representative of its black community. Three years of hard work followed, three years of lessons learned. Playwright Leroi Jones, an angry militant and in the eyes of many a wild-eyed radical, organized the United Brothers. In 1968 the United Brothers ran a convention to nominate three candidates for City Council. Its failure showed that this effort was too narrowly based. In the fall of 1969, in the push for the mayorship, every effort was made to rally broader black support.

"This convention this fall was different," explained Jones. "We were probably the most activist group there, but it wasn't a United Brothers convention. We hooked up with just about every group in the community—the Urban League, Democrats, the Council of Negro Women—every group you can think of that had votes, and we got together on the issues by consensus."

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The struggle for black unity was an uphill fight. Though whites were excluded from the convention and only the Puerto Ricans included with the Blacks, it was hard to get together. Divisions and distrust within the black community were manifest, and only with difficulty could the convention be brought to agree on Gibson. These divisions continued during the campaign: two black members of the City Council voted with Mayor Addonizio to discontinue a contribution to the Urban Coalition in retaliation for its having assumed the costs of the convention; two other Blacks announced they would run against Gibson; and finally, in a blatant split, fifty black ministers endorsed Addonizio for re-election.

The corruption of the Addonizio administration and the disaffection this caused among many white voters offered the Blacks a real chance at the prize. However, the campaigns of Gibson's two black rivals, who remained heedless of appeals to quit the race for the sake of black solidarity, severely threatened black prospects. On the Sunday before the election one of them withdrew in favor of Gibson, but the other, an Essex County legislator named Richardson, held on. He attacked the convention as "racist" because it had excluded whites, and he sought to undermine Gibson by frightening white audiences with the specter of his militant colleague, Leroi Jones.

Gibson's forces worked tirelessly, and the plurality he received in the first election (Richardson receiving only 5 per cent of the votes cast for black candidates) showed that they had been able to mobilize and discipline the black vote. Being the choice of a black con-

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vention boosted Gibson in the eyes of the black community; he stood for both militant black power and middle-class black respectability. Richardson, a self-selected candidate, had no such legitimacy.

The black turnout for the run-off election between Gibson and Addonizio was massive and solid. By now the tactics employed by some of the Addonizio forces had turned racist and ugly. Whereas the first election had been simply a contest between Italians and Blacks for a plurality, the Italians realized that there were not enough of them to beat the Blacks in the run-off and that they had to enlist the support of all the other whites in the city. To accomplish this they sought to make the election a racial confrontation — to create fear among whites. Addonizio hinted that a Gibson victory would signal the beginning of black "rape" and "insurrection" in the city, while many of his workers and supporters were loud and explicit in expressing racial hatred and in raising the specter of black take-over.

Such use of racial fears in a run-off election had been successful elsewhere. In the Los Angeles mayoralty race, Sam Yorty, who had won but 26 per cent of the vote in the first election to the black candidate Bradley's 42 per cent, won in the run-off through the grace of a record white backlash vote. A similar case of backlash voting in the run-off had exhibited itself a month or two before Newark in the Wallace-Brewer race in Alabama.

This phenomenon in which racial fears and antagonisms are whipped up in an election is one we must be prepared to encounter for some time to come. In Newark the Gibson forces *were* prepared. An intensive

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voter registration drive organized by Leroi Jones' New Ark Fund swelled the numbers of black voters. The convention had challenged them to unity. Discipline brought them out and held them together. The measure of white support that Gibson received would have been of no avail had the black community not turned out so heavily.

Winning, of course, is only the beginning. The problems of running a big city government are of nightmare proportions—they do not evaporate because a Black is elected to office. Through such a Black, however, as through any leader who is truly responsive to his constituency, we can begin to attack the crisis of our cities and assert control over our own public laws. Valuable lessons are being learned. One of these, as we have seen, is black solidarity. Another lies in the domain of winning white votes.

Black Is Not Enough

Only in Washington, where we are deprived of self-government, do Blacks represent an absolute majority. In a handful of other major cities, as we have noted, we are nearing the half-way mark that would give us the potential to elect public officials through black votes alone. The prevailing situation, however, is one in which our candidates will need a large measure of white votes in order to be elected. We must learn how to woo these votes, how to allay white fears and make common cause for better, more representative government.

This is tricky because, while we need black solidarity and black discipline behind our candidates, the

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spectacle of "block voting" is scary to whites. Although it is firmly within the democratic tradition, it seems suspect to many, it smacks of takeover and conspiracy, especially when the "block" in question has been outside the mainstream—that is to say, when the block is black.

This fear must be dealt with and minimized. While we must act as a block, we must do so as a matter of course without undue publicity and speechifying about it. Our public statements should underplay, where possible, appeals to our black brothers on the basis of color or our own credentials as soul brothers, and focus rather on larger issues of broader appeal. Our brothers will know we are black. Militant black power rhetoric is expendable.

In Newark white support was necessary, and from the outset Gibson sought to enlist it. Approximately half of his campaign staff was white; white businessmen had underwritten the costs of the convention; a Committee for a United Newark was established and later in the campaign worked to improve communication between the Blacks and the whites. As racial fears and hatreds were goaded by the opposition in the run-off, Gibson consistently endeavored to neutralize them, never succumbing to a temptation to play the racial game. Leroi Jones, accused of being the "extremist" who controlled Gibson like a puppeteer, was advised to remain in the background and later stated publicly, "I have no connection whatsoever with the Gibson campaign machinery; no policy or advisory position." When a white candidate in the first election threw his support to Gibson in the run-off and campaigned ac-

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tively for him, particularly in the white West ward, enough whites could respond to swing the vote.

Many whites assume that a black public official, because of his closer ties to the black community, can handle ghetto disturbances better than a white. The thought that Carl Stokes might prevent racial violence was the main reason he drew a significant white vote in Cleveland in 1967, a peak year of rioting throughout the country. Whites thought they were buying riot insurance and many felt betrayed and furious when a year later the infamous Cleveland shootout occurred between black nationalists and the police. Stokes handled the situation by withdrawing all white police from the neighborhood and leaving only black cops and black leaders to restore law and order. No further killing occurred, although looting continued. Stokes was accused of being too permissive, and memories of this were still vivid in Stokes' 1969 re-election campaign. Embittered, a number of whites who had voted for him in 1967 "because I thought maybe he could calm the colored down," swung against him.

Whites cannot buy riot insurance by electing a Black. What they can buy is time—valuable time for some healing to take place, some bridges of trust to be built. No Black can promise more than this; he cannot promise instant civil peace. While it is true that a Black is more capable of handling ghetto disturbances than a white, it is far better in a campaign to leave this appeal implicit. It is not necessary to spell it out. For those whites who are ready to recognize this do not need to be reminded, and given the racial tensions of

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our cities, the use of blackness as an overt campaign credential can backfire too easily.

Our strategies must be tailored to reduce the psychological threats that whites feel in the face of a black campaign. It is essential that we seek out and stress issues with which whites can identify and which are important to them. The issue can be clean government, as it was for Gibson in Newark; it can be pollution, which has brought white support for Mayor Hatcher in Gary; it can be better transportation planning and freeway control, a common concern for whites and Blacks in many of our cities. Increasingly, the major issue in the eyes of the voters is law and order.

While fear of crime has been largely synonymous with fear of Blacks and while this issue has in the past tended to hurt us, it need not do so. There is no inherent reason why we cannot make common cause with whites in the fight against crime; as we have noted, we need protection more than they do. In the current mood of alarm, the crime issue is so potent that it can eclipse the color line, causing both whites and Blacks to cross over. Whites, I believe, are now readier to vote for a Black who is strong on law and order than for a white liberal who appears to take a more permissive stand. Such willingness to let civil order be the deciding factor is mirrored in the black community as well. In a Chicago congressional primary this year a promising black candidate's support from his own black district was weakened because the community felt he was too "soft" on street gangs. The Blacks' own fear of crime was stronger than their hate for Mayor Daley,

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and Sammy Rayner lost his fight against the city machine.

The biggest challenge that faces us in the political arena is this: building bonds with that mass of the American population now called the white ethnic. This task is difficult, but inescapable. Much attention of late, in scholarly studies and journalistic reports, has been devoted to them—these “forgotten Americans” who are no longer forgotten, these working-class families of recent immigrant stock.

We know them. Our city neighborhoods abut on theirs along borders that are invisible but sharp. When we can escape the ghetto it is, more often than not, into inner-suburbs that are their domains. We compete for jobs. It is at their union doors that we hammer so often in vain. It is their sons and husbands in police uniforms whom we watch with distrust as they patrol our cities.

These folk are no longer letting themselves be “forgotten.” They are speaking out stormily, and sporadic violence erupts. As this happens, social scientists study their plight and catalogue their resentments with a curiosity and concern we Blacks do not share. We are impatient at this concern for the white ethnic. They have been a rung or two above us on the economic ladder and we have felt their heels on our necks.

Yet politically speaking they are of immense concern to us. We share the same cities and congressional districts. Their frustrations vent themselves in racial antagonisms that can defeat our goals and our campaigns. The strength that Wallace drew in the North in the 1968 Presidential campaign came predominantly from

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them. In his book *The Hidden Crisis in American Politics*, Samuel Lubell pointed out that:

In some industrial cities close to half of the known white precincts gave Wallace at least 15% of their vote; in Cleveland, Gary and Newark, two-thirds of the white precincts did.

... The ominous turn that the racial struggle has taken emerges even more sharply when one plots the Wallace vote on maps. In city after city, the conflict takes on a territorial, almost "border war" form. Never is the Wallace vote sprinkled evenly or randomly through a city; always it is packed into compact white worker neighborhoods which confront heavily black districts, almost like two hostile nations.

We cannot afford to shrug off these people with hostile impatience. We worked with them once. In the depression years we worked together to make the industrial unions strong and build a labor movement powerful enough to exact the social legislation of the 1930's. And we need to try to understand them now.

They are numerous. In his excellent study of "The White Worker," Gus Tyler, Assistant President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, claims that foreign-born or first- to third-generation Americans count about forty million or one-fifth of the nation.

Many are poor. Tyler shows that whites represent three-quarters of the nation's families listed as living in poverty, and among the urban poor two-thirds are white. The millions of whites living just above the poverty level are no less obsessed with the struggle for economic security. The inflation and taxes brought on by the Vietnam war bear as unfairly on them as they

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do on us. They see their real income dwindling and their hopes fading. In misplaced anger they turn against us. Hearing of black demands and of governmental programs for black advancement and racial equality, they get the impression that we are being favored at their expense... They even suspect that we Blacks are being used as tools of the establishment to keep them down. Instead of seeing us as fellow victims and potential allies, as Walter Reuther did, they lash out at us.

Calling them racist will not help us. We must break through the barriers of distrust and begin to communicate. It will not be easy, given the daily frictions that feed the hostility between us. But it is a political imperative, and our determination to make common cause will be fed by the knowledge that there is more to unite us than there is to divide us.

We are, black poor and white poor, black worker and white worker, victims of a system whose income distribution is so inequitable as to be almost unbelievable. Tyler's study reveals the startling and chilling fact that income distribution in present-day America is more unequal than in 1910. In 1910 the lowest tenth of the population received 3.4 per cent of the nation's income, today it gets 1 per cent. The lowest four-tenths or 40 per cent, whose share in 1910 was near 20 per cent of the national personal income, today gets only 14 per cent — which, incidentally, is less than that now received by the top 1 per cent of the population.

Such grim figures urge upon us the fact that if we Blacks are ever to reach our goal of a livable life in America, if we are ever to escape the poverty that

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grinds us down, we must ally with the whites who are victimized too. No matter if they suffer less than we because their skin is not black. They still are oppressed, and together we must make common cause against the tax laws that pamper the rich and impoverish the poor, and a common front in our fight for a guaranteed annual income.

Father Geno Baroni, an Italian-American Catholic priest here in Washington, has been working across the country to bring the ethnics, black and nonblack, together. Such efforts deserve our strongest support. While Father Baroni sees great potential for racial conciliation and the building of new coalitions, he reminds us that "the danger is terribly real that the demagogues of hate will prey on the anguish of these communities and will further divide those who should be natural allies."

The white ethnics today are displaying a new militancy. To date it has been largely negative and defensive and largely directed against us. We recognize, however, that the causes of this unrest are not racial but economic. Realizing this we can in our political campaigns and in our long-term goals seek to enlist this militancy to help bring about a redirection of priorities. Its pressure, added to our own and raised to a national scale, could turn the nation around.

Getting It Together

Two of the dominant themes running through this book may seem contradictory. One is the necessity of working the system, of using for our own goals the levers it provides, the issues that are current and the

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temporary coalitions we can form with other groups within it. The other is our authentic and legitimate anger with the system.

I have felt it important to acknowledge and look at this anger: how it expressed itself with defiance and exhilaration in the early days of the black power movement, how it took to the streets in the urban riots, how it spends itself in radical, revolutionary and separatist rhetoric.

When we succumb to the temptation to wrap ourselves up in this anger, to pursue and indulge it as if it were an end in itself, it can take us up blind alleys. The purity of our anger then becomes more important to us than actual gain. When that happens we are, for practical purposes, immobilized. When, however, we keep our heads cool and our eyes on the immediate issue, the anger in us can drive us forward to effective social change. We can harness it, as we see the new breed of black leadership across the country begin to do; and harnessed, it can work for us.

If we are to find the strength to keep on working, anger must be blended again with hope. For this we need to step back periodically to get some perspective on where we have been and where we are going. One of the dangers of unadulterated anger is that it blinds us to the real gains that have been made. We need to appreciate the progress we have made and the battles we have won so that we can find the hope and stamina to go on. Armed with such courage we can face the frustrations that lie ahead, and we will, for we are designed for struggle.

In the epic film of Dr. Martin Luther King's life an

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unforgettable scene recorded the efforts of a group of black citizens to register to vote in Selma, Alabama. Quietly they stood on the steps of the courthouse; neatly dressed, young and old, they waited; a middle-aged woman with grocery bags in her arms leaned wearily against the railing. Periodically the police would emerge through the door, the sheriff with them, and shove the people roughly off the steps. Down on the street the citizens would pull themselves together, straighten ties, readjust shopping bags and, informing the police again that they wished to register to vote, walk back up the steps. Again the cops would heave them off, more roughly and abusively each time. And each time with stolid dignity the Blacks would return.

Those watching the film in a day when that kind of courage had gone out of style were inexpressibly moved. Those were the revolutionaries, I found myself thinking. They were ready to go right down the line for what they believed and what they wanted. No shouting or rhetoric, just the raw courage of their actions which said, "This is rightfully ours and we mean to have it."

I am not suggesting that we return to the tactics of that era. America has changed and we have changed too much for that. What I do suggest is that part of their courage was hope—hope in the ultimate power of the law, however perverted it might be in local practice, hope in man's conscience, hope for a change that, if it came too late for them, at least would be won for their children. At times their efforts seemed futile, but they won their battle. And we who come

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after, who can see the gains, must recapture their hope. We must not fall prey to the pessimism that is fashionable among many Americans today. We must keep our eyes on the prize, for people do not try unless they hope.

We are a remarkable people. We have done what no one thought we could do. There was a time when we said that motivation for change could not spring up in isolation, without outside help. It was assumed that we needed society to get off our backs and give us a break before we as a people could change our self-image and throw off the passivity and self-contempt that oppression breeds. We are remarkable because we found our own self-starting device. Having thought that someone had to turn on the switch downtown, that the generation had to come from somewhere else, we got our own hands on the switch and started the motor. With nothing but our own inner resources we generated motivation and a new sense of self.

We discovered beauty where before we had seen only ugliness. When we look at the hands that are drawn from the harsh water of the scrub pail we now see beauty. When we look at that face in the mirror we no longer see the rejection we knew. It is as if the person who was on the other side of the looking glass is not there any more. Out of our own resources we have created a new self.

We discovered strength. The stamina that enabled us to survive through immeasurable grief and hardship had always been there. It enabled us to sing "I'm so glad trouble won't last always," to hang on and look for comfort and justice in the sweet bye and bye. There

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was strength in that, it brought us through and kept us sane. But in the new self we found a new strength, a hope for the sweet now and now. Working together we have sensed the power of our numbers and found ways to make things happen that could change our lives.

We are admirable because we have done this, but we must go on. With the strength that is in us together we can move mountains if we want, if we mobilize ourselves. We must capitalize on this new sense of self with its beauty and strength. The engine is switched on, we can hear the purr of the motor, the car looks good, it sounds good, and now it has to go somewhere. We have to plot the course and step on the gas and get the car moving, because it will not drive by itself. If we do not start forward to attain equal results, a full share in this country, the purr of the motor will have no meaning. That hum will become simply another part of the dullness surrounding us, it will remind us only that we are not going anywhere.

Back in the 1940's, when there were not nearly the opportunities there are now, the Urban League had a slogan for its vocational guidance work: "The future is yours, plan and prepare." Some criticized us saying, "It is unrealistic to say that to our young people. The future isn't theirs." We maintained, however, that unless you get prepared for opportunities, there will be no opportunities. The concept of equality will be empty if you have not the tools to move into society on an equal basis. So we said, "Go to school, get an education, get whatever is there, because the future is yours if you prepare."

GETTING IT TOGETHER

From the hard work born of just such an attitude emerged the black middle class, the ranks of our professional men, our doctors, lawyers, teachers. The black bourgeoisie has been under attack, but the criticism has been for its limited involvement in the freedom struggle, not for its achievement. Black men's aims are broader now, they include to a greater extent the improvement of life for all their brothers, but that drive to achieve is still needed.

We need to say again to our young people and to ourselves, "The future is yours, plan and prepare." We have new opportunities, new and faster ways of moving people into jobs and educational programs—but the people themselves must be willing to move. We have possibilities for achieving political power, but we must be willing to work, to organize. If we aim for freedom we must exert the self-discipline that is the burden of freedom.

We see then that our struggle involves more than just taking aim at the white man. Part of our struggle is focusing on ourselves and on the use of our own resources. It is taking advantage of the dynamics of our new self and of its energy. It is using our angers constructively. It is getting ourselves together. This is more than getting together to talk or to protest. It is doing with and for ourselves what only we can do.

(Continued from front flap)

an attack on the problems of education, employment, crime, housing, police relations, and political power. The emphasis maintained throughout is that, contrary to radical rhetoric, the anger of the black American can be channeled to work for change within the only framework available to it—contemporary American society.

In **For Blacks Only** Tucker does not talk about what "the system" or "the power structure" should do. He doesn't catalogue the desperate conditions of black America, or explain their causes. Instead, he concentrates on what can be done, guiding the reader away from violence and in the direction of effective action.



Sterling Tucker has been executive director of the Washington, D.C. Urban League for more than a decade, and has also served as Director of Field Services for the National Urban League. He was national coordinator for the Solidarity Day March in support of the Poor People's Campaign, and was vice-chairman and organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. Tucker is the author of two earlier books, **Beyond the Burning** and **Black Reflections on White Power**.

sculpture by ilse eerdmans

"Lucid, persuasive and compelling, For Blacks Only could prove to be the textbook for change in the 70s. Sterling Tucker speaks with both knowledge and authority, and he should be listened to by both blacks and whites."

C. ERIC LINCOLN
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